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HARPER & BROTHERS, NEW YORK



JANET

THE MAIN ROAD

A NOVEL

BY
MAUDE RADFORD WARREN

AUTHOR OF
"THE LAND OF THE LIVING"
"PETER PETER" ETC.



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BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
1913



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**TO
GEORGE HORACE LORIMER**

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Book I
THE LARVA

THE MAIN ROAD

I

JANET OF THE SHELTERED LIFE

WHEN Janet was a child, a vivid, repressed, darkling elf, she lived in a land of dreams. The dim, unrealized background of it were her father and her cousin Lilius. Ordinarily, his child was no more a potent reality to William Bellamy than he was to her, but there were occasions when he sentimentalized over her to his crony, old Jeremy Keyes. Some obscure discontent would strike into his idle blood; he would feel stirrings toward action, and by means of a whisky bottle he would create a shadowy, glorious world, with himself and Janet as triumphant actors.

When the evening began they would be merely two quite ineffective men, sitting opposite each other at Bellamy's Sheraton table; Keyes, a retired farmer, stupid, prosperous, fat—a man with a shape like the back of a cab, and slow, uncomprehending mind; Bellamy, living on the interest of his dead wife's little property, impractical, unobservant rather than detached, a gray shadow of a man who might have paid his shot in the world had any one put him in the way of it. They would drink and look into the open fire as they moved their glasses, making vague rings on the polished surface of the table. Their

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eyes would grow glazed and still, and the leaping flames would fuse into a gently waving curtain of blue and yellow. Keyes would drink as unmoved as one of his own cattle, but the veins of William Bellamy would begin to glow, and would telegraph to his mind a delicately vivid happiness. The shabby room would be as lovely as any in the old Irish house where he had been born, the youngest of too many younger sons. Again he would feel the sense of power that had been his just because he was strong and handsome and twenty-five.

As he sat drinking he would forget the stages by which he had withdrawn himself from any intention to compete with other men, on the excuse that a handicap takes away a gentleman's chance. He would forget whatever there had been of unmanliness in his reasons for marrying the daughter of a Wisconsin farmer, skipping all that was undignified, dreary, and cheap and a cause for self-disgust. Gone were the hours of linked monotony; he was in a real world, where there could be action as well as softness, and it grew more real as he moved his glass and made more stains on the mahogany. He would feel a kind of wondering contempt for old Keyes, sitting silent opposite him, his fat, sunburned hands clasped across the two unbuttoned gaps in his waistcoat.

To-morrow he would be leaving Keyes and the other people of the little prairie-town far behind; he would go out in the world of men and find the place that was waiting for him. But as the hours went on the delicate happiness would fade and an acute despondency come upon him, a sense that he had lain quiescent in the shadows by the great highroad of life, and had let the world go by him. He would fight for his self-respect, trying to think of some achievement, and then even through his befuddled senses would break obscurely that primitive feeling that has been common to man since he lived in the caves, the consciousness of having at least passed on the torch of life. In its noblest aspect it takes the form of giving

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our devotion and service to our children, who will do the big things in the world that were too great for us. In its basest form it means procreating those who will some day give us our daily bread. Bellamy, struggling with his sense of failure, would cry out as much to himself as to old Keyes.

"Whatever my defects are, at least I have seen to it that my Janet has led a sheltered life."

And those words would be the end of his glorious world into which there had penetrated no thought of what the real world of his Janet might be. Next morning there would remain no traces of all those poignant, selfish dreams except a dozen cloudy, dim rims on the mahogany, which Janet would have to erase.

As Janet's mother had died when she was eight, the sheltering of the child was achieved by Cousin Liliás, a pretty, faded Irishwoman, well bred, ill taught, and quite without compelling power of any sort. Her little cousin seemed to her a small savage, chiefly because she had inherited her mother's Western accent and was tremendously demonstrative. Cousin Liliás came of a family which lavished more affection on dogs and horses than on children; it was an indirect way of warning the children that they must control their emotions. Such indirection had little effect on Janet, who was as unobservant as her father. She merely stopped kissing Cousin Liliás and kissed her dolls and kitten instead. Cousin Liliás chiefly tried to conquer the child's dreadful accent. Bellamy's only training consisted of an explosive cry when Janet's manners displeased him.

"For God's sake, Liliás, can't you teach the child how to hold her knife?" Or, "My God, must the child walk like a stoker?"

Janet early assumed that there was some relation between her Maker and awkward manners.

Cousin Liliás intrusted her with some fundamental facts of sex, painfully, blushing. These Janet, as was

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natural, took blushing. She was told that she must never speak of them and never even think of them, for nice people ignored them. Cousin Liliás suffered from gaps in her logic. Janet somehow gathered the idea that God did all things well, in general, but that if He could only reconsider and change His plans He would alter some of His provisions which were not ladylike, besides being hard on women. What was worse, Janet was led to assume that sex, its facts and consequences, played a very small part in human affairs. It was as if she were looking at a temple, but were somehow convinced that the foundations and buttresses were not really there. If she had been less dreamy, or if she had been associated more with other children, even if she had been more than superficially observant, some instinct might have developed which would have warned her not only that sex is a subtle enemy - friend to a girl, but also that there lay in herself a tremendous fund of emotion.

If Cousin Liliás had been asked to interpret the term "sheltered" she might have said that it is used of a girl who does not earn her own living, or else who earns it by the pursuit of some profession not very close to life. We put such a girl behind a barrier whence we translate life to her discreetly. We interfere with her power of thinking, which is as much a part of the equipment of the girl who is to survive as is the necessity of making the most of her good looks or handling her money sensibly. We muffle her thoroughly, considering that a certain discipline of manner and of mind are all the armoring she will need. And impeded with a false scale of values, hampered with ignorance, she will be as defenseless before the world as a crab that has newly cast its shell, and about as uncertain in her movements. All the great griefs, as well as all the intangible, obscure griefs arising from untrained emotions, which a deeply disciplined spirit could meet and vanquish, will fasten their teeth in her, batten on her, sap her vitality, and lower her powers of service. Alone

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and unhelped, she will struggle to a kind of adjustment; she will forge painfully a number of weapons which must serve her need. And with it all she will not necessarily have found her place in the ranks, or have reached a real understanding of the work of the great battalions of which she is a part, and of the facts with which these battalions must deal. She is in the background eternally, a member of the twilight legions, the women whom no one has taught to think.

One great event in Janet's life was learning to read, for she was thus introduced to the only real world she knew for many years—novels. Nothing else counted—not the two or three little girls whom Cousin Liliás considered fit playmates, not the village school she was later allowed to attend on condition that she would have nothing to do with common little children, not Cousin Liliás, and, most of all, not her father. Lessons were something that had to be done in order that there might be time for novels. Getting through her tasks expertly, she would find a bar of maple-sugar and retire behind a horsehair sofa in the room which her mother used to call the parlor. Here she would curl, one leg bent under, her black, wavy hair tangled from being pushed back impatiently lest it obscure the pages, her eager eyes skipping like squirrels from word to word, her full, red mouth parted, her whole face alight with a breathless hunger for what was coming next. Rent away from her book by the call to a meal, she would go reluctantly to the Sheraton table and lose herself in dreams of what she had read, enduring the presence of her father and her cousin as necessary intrusions in an otherwise perfect world. At first the stories she read were merely exciting stories, things that happened to other people. But by the time she was of high-school age she had ceased to objectify. Insensibly what had come to interest her in the novels were not events, but the emotions of the characters, and particularly how they loved. She read everything, good books and trash, with equal zest

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and almost equal indiscrimination, for in all sorts there was love—love that overwhelmed and bore one to the heights of bliss if one were successful, and dashed one to the depths if one were unsuccessful. Janet began to identify herself with the heroine—the successful person. The next step was to dream of her life outside the novel. She could not always live with Father and Cousin Liliias; some day she would love and be loved, and then she would be married and be happy ever after.

Nobody told her that novels are false in their effect—at least, for the mind of a young girl; that they do not exhibit the real proportions of life; that they exhibit only the moments of keenest emotion and take for granted the long stretches of level feeling between. She believed that men and women both loved ardently and forever if they truly loved. Because the novels showed a couple at the height of intense feeling she did not know that men feel differently from women, and that feeling, as the woman sees it, plays a small part relatively in a man's life. No one told her that people that marry and live happily ever after are often happy in spite of marriage rather than because of it. She did not know that the happiest marriages are built on calculated sacrifices and abnegations. To her life was spontaneous love. In her narrow field of acquaintances she might have seen facts that would have upset the theory of the novels. The novels permitted a few unmarried women who had relinquished love and who led noble lives, giving their service to married lovers who already had everything, or to the poor, who had the chance to be grateful. Janet might have noticed that her cousin Liliias had not given up love; she had had the right to it denied her; she was starving for love under her mask of restraint. She loved Bellamy, and he felt it and selfishly let it give him a specious kind of consequence in his own eyes. No beauty in that situation. There was old Jeremy Keyes, married three times, just as soddently content with one mate as with another; all he needed was a

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figure of a woman. There was every couple she saw at church, or on the porches of their houses, taking each other for granted, by no means drinking draughts of love from each other's eyes. There were, even in this little town, desertion and scandal. But all this Janet did not take into her consciousness because these people did not exist for her, nor did she know that far more powerful and significant than the tremulous, transitory emotion, which to her was a permanence, was the daily round of the common lot—birth and death, accident and chance, and, above all, work.

She had gone to the high school simply because she was in the habit of school, and her teachers took it for granted she would go on. The American ideal of educating the child till it had to go to work prevailed with them. Janet was to be a sheltered person; she would have enough to live on, and therefore she could continue in school. She was a shimmering vessel of emotion, and, unfortunately for her, the emotion was of the outgoing kind; it did not promise to sit still always and wait. Fortunately, it could translate itself into a kind of mental action. When she was sixteen she became more actively interested in books. The lover had not arrived, and she must make herself more fit for him by being a very cultivated woman, who could aid him in his work in the world, whatever that might be. Janet was destined to go through most of the important phases in the love of man and woman, and it was not till after many years that she lost that youthful fallacy, which some women never abandon at any age, of trying to inspire a man, of assuming that under the stimulation of feminine belief and encouragement he can accomplish everything.

Meanwhile she went on suspending her life until her lover should come and bid her wake; and she retarded her consciousness of sex and kept herself very ignorant and childish, partly by spending her vitality in study, and partly by dreaming, instead of observing the people she

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saw. Thus she missed the drama of sex that went on around her. Life in a small town or village is—or when Janet was growing up was—singularly destitute of amusement. The moving-picture show had not yet come; there were few reading-rooms or debating societies or evening clubs; few opportunities to exercise the social instinct in groups. The result was that the young human beings gravitated to each other in twos. They went to church or prayer-meeting or Epworth League or to church sociables, and the indoor function was to what came later as water is to wine. What these young, pulsing creatures enjoyed was going home slowly by twos, experimenting in the outlying regions of the one mystery their lives would ever hold, and that not for long—sex. Any young man who could afford it had a carriage, a rare one had a motor-car. The couples would drive together under the wide night; there would be embracings, tentative, and then tremulously eager, which might lead to anything. Usually they led to a legal mating and to long, sober, work-filled lives, contented, but not at all transfused with the romance which had thrilled the two little atoms when, moving about in their world not realized, they had first been drawn to each other. But they had had their hour; of the real romance of it Janet saw nothing.

“Janet has never had a fellow,” the high-school girls said; and the vulgarity of this phrasing horrified her. She could not see that, allowing for differences in fineness of grain and of upbringing, there was no essential difference between what these girls wanted and what she wanted. The difference lay in the fact that they had awakened more quickly to a sense of what they wanted than she had; Janet’s realization was yet to be. And if the methods of approach to the mystery might differ, perhaps the poetry was no less potent in each case; only Janet was prepared to express in words, to herself at least, every shade of the emotions that were to sway her.

II

THE ROAD TO THE BELOVED

WHEN she was seventeen there entered into Janet's world the first human being with whom she had any real intercourse. This was a pretty Southern girl, Sallie Keyes, the niece of old Jeremy Keyes, worse than orphaned, because her only living parent was in an insane-asylum. Jeremy Keyes took her advent placidly; his third wife had just died, and this girl would work very well into his household. Sallie was seventeen in body and brain, twenty-seven in general instinct, and in wiles and lures Eve-old. In short, she was typically Southern—langourous, easy-going, slow in speech, and behind that slowness very alert in mind when any necessity arose that commanded her real attention. Above all, she had knitted into her very bones the conviction that anything a woman wants in life she has to get by the route of a man.

Sallie was prettier than Janet. Every feature Janet had was good; her eyes were a clear amber, the eyelashes a deep black; her nose was narrow and straight, her upper lip short, her mouth red, her chin prettily rounded, her curling hair shaped beautifully about her forehead; but somehow her features did not fuse into that indescribable but always recognizable quality which is beauty. Her expression, moreover, was too direct and too hungry; the fact that her soul was about to embark on some predatory expedition was too patent to be attractive to the average person. Sallie, on the contrary, had not a single good feature. Her dark eyes were too small, her eyebrows too indeterminate, her nose too short, and her

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upper lip and mouth too long. Her straight, brown hair was so scanty that it had to be reinforced by bows. But the bows were coquettish, and so was Sallie's expression. When she spoke or laughed, a dozen merry little imps lurked in her eyes and about her mouth. She looked at people sidewise, and she had not at all the air of expecting some day to dart out into life and get what she wanted; her manner was that of expecting that life would lazily cruise up to her and offer her a choice of delectable things. She always got what she wanted. For instance, old Jeremy Keyes had expected her to do his housework, but within two days of her arrival the woman who had cared for him after his wife's death was back again waiting on Sallie, and devoted to her.

"How did you manage it, Sallie?" inquired Janet, interested in all that concerned this new alluring creature.

"I don't know, honey; I wouldn't say I managed it at all," drawled Sallie. "I just jumped on my uncle's knees, and patted his cheek, and rubbed my head against his chin, and said: 'Uncle, yo' just naturally cain't expect me to work; I can show people how, like I did the niggers for po' mother. I can make a home for a man, and see that he's comfortable and that no one imposes on him, but I'm just naturally he'pless with my hands.'"

Janet laughed. She got a vision of what Jeremy's glazed eyes and dropped jaw must have been when his niece perched on his knees.

"Even his own wife wouldn't have dared to pat his cheek," she said.

"Oh, law," remarked Sallie, "she was on'y his wife—and third, at that. When a man has been ma'ied three times any girl that ain't his wife has a great advantage."

This struck Janet as amusing but flippant. If she had only known it she could have learned a great deal about life from Sallie, who was much more mature than herself, and infinitely more calculating and earthy. Sallie would have been incapable of making even a little sacrifice for

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any one; Janet was of nobler stuff. But in sheer ability to get on in the world Sallie was immensely her superior. Janet did not believe in many of the sentiments Sallie expressed, because these did not square with the ideals laid down in the novels. Sallie could not help patronizing Janet, but she liked to hear her talk.

"Law, what a flow of words you have, honey," she said, with all a Southerner's admiration of eloquence, one day after Janet had been expounding her views of love, ending with the quotation, slightly inaccurate, as was characteristic:

"Unless you can muse in a crowd all day
On the absent face that fixed you;
Unless you can love as the angels may
With the breadth of Heaven betwixt you;
Unless you can dream that his faith is fast
Through behooving and unbecoming,
Unless you can die when the dream is past,
Oh, never call it loving."

"It isn't words," replied Janet, indignantly; "it is the truth about real love."

"Now, honey-bug, listen to me. Supposin' you went around musing in a crowd all day, don't you reckon the crowd would bump into you some? You'd make it mighty inconvenient for them. Don't you reckon some one would break in on yo' musin', tell you supper was ready and to come runnin'?"

"It is easy for you to make fun," said Janet, with the chilly intonations which her voice, always beautifully modulated, fell into when she was annoyed; "and, of course, one doesn't take every word of poetry literally. One means that always subconsciously, and much of the time consciously, one is dreaming of the beloved."

Sallie always felt a good deal of respect for Janet when she said "one" instead of "I." It was a dim expression of race; it carried a flavor of social superiority

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which Sallie unconsciously recognized. But she tried to assert herself.

"You got it out of a book," she charged; "you haven't really been in love. Wait until you've been engaged like I have."

"Sallie!" cried Janet, breathlessly. "Really, are you engaged?"

"Not now," said Sallie, sedately. "I haven't seen a boy here I'd look at."

"But—but then you aren't in love!" said Janet. "When you said you were engaged—"

"So I have been—twice. How long do you expect a girl to stay engaged to the same person?"

"I expect a nice girl to stay engaged until she marries him," said Janet, severely. "Love is too sacred a thing to go hawking about from man to man."

"Law, did you get that out of a book?" asked Sallie, impressed.

"Not those very words; but all poets and all true lovers would tell you that."

"There are lots of lovers that aren't true, then," said Sallie, placidly. "How do you expect a po' girl or boy to know when they're in love if they don't try around a little?"

"If it is real love they feel it at once," said Janet, positively. "It can't be restrained. Besides—"

"Besides what?" demanded Sallie, as Janet paused in some confusion.

"It's not worth saying."

"That means you are afraid you'll hurt my feelings. You cain't, and I'm mighty curious."

"When you are engaged," said Janet, shyly, "you—you kiss—"

"Of co'se," said Sallie, serenely; "that's most of the fun."

"But then if you break off the engagement and the real lover comes, think of the shame! How could you come to him—tarnished?"

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Sallie looked at her speculatively; then her look changed to a sort of protecting sympathy.

"Law, chile," she said, "it's clear you ain't waked up yet."

Janet heard the words, but of what Sallie really meant she understood not a syllable.

The question rose in Janet's mind as to what she could do, now that the Academy had no more to offer her. She scarcely knew how she conceived the idea of going to college; it was born of her belief that the more thoroughly trained her mind was, the more worthy she would be of the beloved. No one told her that she might never marry at all or might marry badly; no one asked her why she should assume that chance had marked her out for happiness; it had never occurred to her to say to herself:

"I am prepared to accept happiness without questioning; now am I prepared to accept possible grief?"

Her craving for a lover and marriage and happiness was an obsession. She lived in this longing. Her want was as innocent and insistent as a child's, and far more persistent. Bellamy and her cousin looked at her—and saw nothing. There were hours when they might have seen her wearing a dreamy, sentimental expression, weaving more deeply the visions that clogged her power to understand life as it is. But Cousin Liliias, because she starved her own emotions and was ashamed of her secret longing, denied these emotions; in moments of bitter self-reproach she told herself that "nice" women did not feel as she did. Bellamy had long forgotten what his own early days of marriage had surely taught him—that some women are mere trembling chords of feeling, incapable of playing anything but the personal notes, responding only to love. Bellamy, if he thought about emotions at all, considered that young girls, "sheltered" as Janet had been, had mild, church-pew sort of feelings, destined to cause no one any trouble.

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Janet told herself, then, that her mind required further the training of a college course. She saw some difficulty in persuading her father and her cousin. They were committed to a routine, and she would be the last person whom they would expect to disturb it. In ordinary matters Janet was yielding, but here was a matter that was extraordinary, because it concerned "him." She spoke to Bellamy on one of the long summer evenings which he liked because they reminded him a little of the slow-coming twilights of his old home. The Bellamy farm-house was just on the edge of town, and thus away from all the cheap and trivial noises of the street. The lawn was filled with beautiful trees, and Bellamy had carried out some successful landscape-gardening. It was the only real work he had done after his marriage, and he had undertaken it only, because he could not bear to have a home that did not look like a "gentleman's place." He was sitting now on the brick terrace he had built in front of the house, and he was looking half-appreciatively over his handiwork when Janet came toward him. In the waning light his fine, gray head and straight, still, slim figure stood out with more distinction even than they had by day.

"Father," she said, "there would scarcely be any use in my going back to the Academy next year. I've had all the classes."

He waited.

"And yet I'm not quite prepared for college. I need more work in Latin and Greek and French."

"Prepared for college?" said Bellamy, quietly. "I was not aware that there was any question of going to college."

Janet steeled herself. The more quietly her father spoke the more obstinate he was likely to be.

"I should like to go, Father. My idea has been that this young insurance man who has just come to town, Mr. Wilson, might be glad to tutor me. He's not doing

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any too well, I hear, and they say he is thoroughly well educated."

"The fact that he graduated from college does not mean that he is fit to teach," said Bellamy, in a slightly complaining tone. "From all I hear, he comes from some prominent family in Chicago, which had plenty of money during the time he was in college, till his father lost his fortune through being involved in some shady business."

Janet was accustomed to her father's manner of sidling away from a subject which he found disagreeable. She hastened to bring him back to the point.

"All rich young men don't necessarily waste their time in college," she said. "I'm told that he was quite good in the classics. I'm sure he could teach me."

"It might be expensive," said Bellamy, a little testily, "and since you are not going to college you might just as well not stuff your head with Greek and Latin."

A steely intention solidified within Janet. Quite instinctively she seized the one means of power she had.

"I know we have not talked over my going to college, Father," she said, "but I am sure you want me to have all the advantages I can, and, really, we have spent very little of the money mother mentioned in her will for my education. Of course, I can wait for a year, until I'm eighteen, when I'll have it all, if it's more convenient to you. I had no idea of using it all, of course; it takes very little to go to college, and a great deal to keep up a place like this properly."

She felt almost brutal as she spoke. Until her father opposed her, and until she felt surging up in her the will to protect the future of the man she was to love, she had scarcely remembered that all the farm and half the money her mother had left were hers. Bellamy, too, had come to think of it as all his. His straight figure stiffened a little; almost he felt as if he had been struck. Unconsciously Janet had been using the weapon which is the most powerful any woman can have, even in this day of

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progress toward fair play, equal suffrage, and general uplifting of the status of woman; she had reminded the man, who supposed he controlled her destiny, that she was economically independent of him.

"Have you been planning what you would do with your money?" he asked her, a trifle bitterly.

"Why should I make plans for us, since you have done it so well and for so long?" she asked, gently. "But I supposed that when I came of age I should have to talk things over with you. I'm growing up, you see, Father, and so my allowance would have to be increased."

She had put it so gently that Bellamy's pride was assuaged.

"You are quite right," he agreed, forgetting that she had no allowance and had never had one.

"Of course, I know that it takes a good deal to keep up the place; we can't live like ordinary farmers," Janet said. "I shouldn't want to send away the gardener, or give up the riding-horse, or anything like that. Do we spend all the interest on the money, Father?"

"I am afraid we do," replied Bellamy, briefly. He was a bad farmer, quite too proud or indifferent to make the best of the land.

"That is a pity," mused Janet. "But we can think out some way of retrenchment which won't touch you and Cousin Lilius. Perhaps we can rent the farm on shares to Jeremy Keyes; he would be glad, I'm sure. I'll need very little for college."

"It seems to be settled," said Bellamy, disagreeably.

Sallie Keyes would have jumped on his knee and said, "Law, no; not if you don't like it. I was just plannin' what I thought you'd like. We'll do just like you say."

Then Sallie would have placidly assumed that he said she was to go to college. But Janet had no talent for indirection, except of the simplest sort. She said, gently, "I'd like to go to college, Father."

Two or three days later her father said to her: "I've

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been speaking to this young man Wilson. I fancy insurance is a lean enough mistress to him. He'll be glad to teach you."

"Perhaps Sallie would like to join us," Janet suggested; "then it would not cost so much."

"I have no talent for cheeseparing," said Bellamy, crisply; "arrange that as you choose."

Several days later Richard Wilson appeared at the Bellamy house with three or four books under his arm, and in his mind a sense of irritation that he could not earn his board in some easier way than by teaching two giggling school-girls. At college a facetious friend had dubbed Wilson "the sea-blue Injun," on seeing him competing on the track team, his lithe body clad in a blue jersey, above which rose his very dark chest and neck and splendid head, topped by a canopy of heavy black curls. Shining as if suddenly in his dark, rugged face was a pair of wide-set, sea-blue eyes. Even in his college-days girls hesitated between calling him the most attractive ugly man they had ever seen, or a beautiful gargoyle, or simply "somehow stunning." Whether beautiful or plain, he had all the testimony to personality which even a handsome man could expect; that is, he could make people look at him twice. He walked with a long, loose-knit stride, like the men of the desert who find the sand velvet to their feet. He was keen in the debating societies, where he shot up suddenly, tossed the back of his hand against his curly hair, and spoke in a voice that began in a cool drawl, and suddenly became flooded with warmth as his theme grew upon him. He had been arrogant and sweeping and sure of himself, and he had thought it was because of himself. Then money, if not position, had been swept away in his father's failure; he saw the fallacy (in America, at least) of position without money. And he saw, too, that his joyous arrogance had been less because of itself than because of the money and power behind it. He had set out after his first disillusion-

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sionment to conquer the world, and he had found himself subtly in the way of all victories. Now he was in the late twenties, and success would have so little of him that she had marooned him in a small Wisconsin town where the demand for his services was coy enough.

When he passed across the brick terrace of the Bellamy house the two girls waiting for him on the porch looked at him with appraising eyes. Janet, her mind on the Greek and Latin which was to be one of her passports to the country of joy, saw only a dark, strange-looking young man, quite unlike any one she had ever met, and not at all like any picture she had ever drawn of manly beauty. "Queer blue eyes in a brown face, but he looks as if he knew a lot," she thought.

Sallie Keyes, with no thought of the classics, but wholly with the idea that she was to meet a gentleman in this town of gawky boys—Sallie, who had already tasted of men and could see inner quality behind a quiet exterior, said to herself:

"Honey, hush! He's the prettiest 'homely man I ever saw!'"

So their lessons began, and the young man conscientiously fumbled until he had found the pedagogic method which got the best results—the best results from Janet, that is. He soon addressed her almost exclusively during the lessons, speaking usually in a quiet, slow voice; but once or twice, when he was moved by the music of the old tongue, his words came thrilling out strong and fast. Those were the only times he ever touched Janet's imagination. She felt him as quite an old person, grave as teachers had to be, more worthy of respect than most teachers because he knew more. She never thought of him as a man.

"Oh, Sallie," she said once, provoked by her friend's laziness, "I should think you'd be ashamed not to study. You let me beat you all to pieces; you simply won't look at books."

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"I don't have to, honey," Sallie said.

"But you won't know anything."

"I can get ma'ied without knowin' anything," said Sallie, for the friends did not pretend to each other that there was anything in the world worth while except marriage. "Don't you know men don't like girls to know anything?"

"In the South, perhaps—"

"Ev'ywhere; why, honey-bug—"

Sallie hesitated; she regarded Wilson not as a learned person, but as an attractive man.

"Go on."

"I wouldn't go on if I thought you'd care, but you don't. You take this here Richard Wilson himse'f. It's you he praises in the class; it's you he glows with pride over; but when we walk down to the gate with him, it's me he looks at and talks to. He comes to our house, too. Do you reckon it's Uncle Je'my he calls on? Greek and Latin are all very well, but they're not the way to any man's heart—not even the man you practise on until this here beloved you talk of comes up to get his turn of lovin'."

III

JANET'S ACADEMIC WORLD

JANET ran down the steps of one of a long, gray, gaunt row of apartment-houses on Drexel Avenue, which sheltered some of the students who did not live in the University dormitories. She was a vivid enough figure as she stood for a moment to wave back at her landlady, Mrs. Sessions. The wind and the sun had captured some of the little dark curls on her forehead and were whipping color and light into her cheeks and eyes. All her youth and hope spoke in her pretty gestures, and the landlady smiled down at her ungrudgingly. Mrs. Sessions, despite her motherly lines, had a suspicious soul whose most complimentary action was to suspend judgment on a student. It had not been her experience that those in quest of the higher truth were any more exempt from practical subterfuges than ordinary people. She called light housekeeping, carried on when against the rules of the house, low deceit; the girl students called it doing the best one could. Janet would rather have lodged differently, but her allowance was only seventy dollars a month. She could not have managed to get more of her own money without cramping her father and Cousin Liliás. Though she had to emaciate her standards of living, she considered that she was bigger than any of her standards.

She turned eastward toward the campus, smiling vaguely because it was a good day, and because she felt well, and because on this day she was twenty-one. Though she was in her junior year, she was still living in her world of

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sweet but disintegrating emotion, trying to bring everything outside into herself as fuel for that fire of the spirit that was some day to be spread before her husband, not at all trying to identify herself with those outside objects and ideas. By temperament and self-development she was perfectly fitted to make her education illiberal. Instead of being planted firmly on the harsh though fruitful plateau of science, Janet was wandering in the pleasant, vague by-paths of elective courses in literature and philosophy. "Required" courses she handled much in the same perfunctory way in which, as a child, she had done her dusting before retiring to the world of a novel.

Other students walked with her on this bracing morning, but she saw them just as she saw all life, merely as shadows. She had some friendships among young men and women—not the fashionables, because she had no position and no money, was not a striking beauty, and dressed badly; but the friendships meant little to her. She had a choiceness rather related to arrogance which made her unconsciously save herself for real friendships, just as she was saving herself for the beloved. She was not yet impatient for his coming—and still a birthday might be a day of adventure. At least, it began a new year which might well on some of its days unlock the door of the great adventure. Suddenly as she mounted the stairs of one of the gray, dignified University buildings the students mounting beside her seemed a little more concrete than usual, a little more as if they might have lives and dramas of their own that mattered.

She entered a class-room where she was taking a course in English composition under the remote care of a professor with a strongly marked Eastern accent, who, by the simple device of raising his eyebrows, could put a wide intellectual and social chasm between himself and the members of his class. She was a trifle late, and the most convenient seat was one on the back row, usually sacred to young men who seem to prefer to get as far

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away as possible from the source of their information. Janet's seat was beside a young man at whom she had not really looked, though she remembered vaguely seeing him on other recitation-days, and knew that his name was Charters. As the hour progressed, however, she could not help becoming decidedly aware of him, because whenever the professor said something he did not like he scraped his chair along the floor. He scraped his chair rather frequently. One scrape so nearly tipped him over that he had to seize at the arm of her chair to save himself. Then she glanced at him, and he whispered:

"Thank you for weighing a hundred and thirty pounds. If it had been ninety, I'd have been a goner."

He was the type of Chicagoan who could look both alert and good-humored without making the one quality subtract at all from the other. He was fair and broad-browed, broad-nosed, and broad-mouthed, with calm, observing, brown eyes that could ruffle into a twinkling ribaldry. As he was at least twenty-five or six, Janet felt that he must have strayed into the class from the graduate school, or else was a "special." There was something about him that differentiated him from the ordinary student. He was quite as exuberant in his manner, but he had some flavor of achievement about him.

The professor took up a composition to read, and the young man whispered, half to himself, half to Janet:

"Oh, Lord, it's mine; watch him call it rot and newspaperish."

The professor read the composition in a faintly mocking voice, and cast it down on the desk, as if glad to get rid of it, with the words:

"Very raw; quite journalistic."

A gong signaled the end of the period, and Chart walked out beside Janet.

"He roasted yours, too, didn't he? That one he 'an imitation of Henry James, n so feeble as

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"Yes; I hope that after a little while I'll have found out just what his standards are, and—"

"That's just it," grumbled Charters, walking her with him by sheer force of intention out of the recitation-hall and over to a seat on the campus. "I took time from my law courses and joined this class, thinking I'd learn to write real things. It's the last place in the world to learn."

Janet gazed fascinated at the rebel.

"Oh, I don't mean that a few courses are not good for middling-gauge people who want to know how to write a decent letter. But it's no place for a person who wants to get into the magazines."

"But why?"

"The ones that ought to judge our writing should be the great American public; we translate to them through the medium of twenty or forty editors. But here we sit up and try to please one man. Mind you, we don't write what we think is good or what we think our sisters and cousins and aunts would find pleasure in. We aim to please one little solitary human being who may be no more in touch with real life than an airship is in touch with a mud-scow. We beat our brows until we find a subject he'd like, and one in a style he'd like—or rather you do, and your reward is to be called a weak imitation of Henry James. I don't; I do something that would make the fellows in a newspaper office clap me on the back, and he calls it 'raw' and 'journalistic.' I guess it's raw, but I guess it's real."

Janet was looking at him with unfeigned interest.

"Do you know, I half think you're right?" she said.

"You're right; I'm right. I'm glad I came to the university, if only because I'll get out of here this summer with a new respect for real things."

"I don't see what could be more real than three hundred professors and ten thousand students, all cultivating their own little worlds," Janet; and if there was any beautiful voice covered it.

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But no admiration of a beautiful voice could keep Charters from freeing his mind.

"That's what I resent," he said, "the implication that cultivating your mind is so much more important than anything else. I think breaking stones is a good occupation, and going in swimming is as much a part of life as bucking up on English literature."

"You don't mean to say that you think any one thing in life is as important as any other?" asked Janet.

"It isn't necessary to compare them with one another and call one better and the other worse. A person has preferences, of course, but I mean it's all part of the game, it's all life. I want to reproduce life, and I was fool enough to think I could come up here and let one little insect show me how."

Janet laughed at his vigorous disgust. She settled back easily on the bench and began to argue with him. Charters had a gift of making the person who was with him want to stay with him. He was of a questioning, even of an iconoclastic disposition, while Janet, as was to be expected from her embryonic powers of thinking, was prone to accept as inevitable any situation that did not make her actually uncomfortable. She had accepted her Wisconsin surroundings because she did not have to be a part of them. She accepted her University surroundings, and liked them, because they seemed the road to her dream. It had never occurred to her to question the wisdom of what she was studying or the wisdom of those who taught her. If she liked her instructor, she liked what he taught her. The girls and men she had been thrown with had not been critical in their attitude. She had taken them for granted; or, rather, she had not taken them at all. But here was some one who could not be taken for granted. Charters won her esteem by showing a slighting regard for her worshipful, indiscriminating attitude toward information and the professorial point of view. Moreover, when he mentioned his father's settle-

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ment-house and learned that she had never heard of it, and had never visited any of the Chicago settlements, nor gone to hear an address or lecture or musical outside the University walls, he obviously restrained his surprise.

"Of course, you have not been here very long," he said.

But Janet was not obtuse. He might just as well have said to her:

"My good infant, what have you been doing with your time? Do you think the University of Chicago is the only place on earth? Don't you realize that there are movements going on in this world that are closer to life than mere books?"

She colored a little as she rose.

"It's rather too cool to be sitting here even if this is the time for the soft weather of January," she said; and her touch of self-consciousness impelled her to give her beautiful voice a hint of indifferent superiority.

"It is coolish," Charters assented. "It just proves, though, that if they do freeze our minds here, the rest of us is sufficiently hardy. Good-by, Miss Bellamy."

As she left him he said emphatically to himself:

"That's a girl I am going to see more of."

Janet knew that the thought was passing through his mind. That indefinable sex-sense in a woman which is awake only when she is not too much interested in a man signaled her that Charters liked her, prophesied that they would be friends. She walked away from him rather slowly, a little humble because he had made her faintly aware that there were wonderful avenues of the world which her own blindness had sealed to her.

"I suppose I am asleep in some ways," she conceded, reluctantly.

But how thoroughly asleep she was she did not even dimly realize. She was living for the love of a man who perhaps did not exist, and all about her were realities she did not see, of work and beauty and pain and self-sacrifice. She was one girl, asking for love, ignorant of the

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many other things women need. All about her there was a battalion of women she could not appreciate, women who had supposed themselves born to give, but had learned to think, and were now asking to receive as well as to give. Janet did not feel the first great stirrings of the feminist movement.

"There is one of the women who want to vote," she thought, indifferently, as she passed a trim, tailored figure on the campus.

She might have looked into that worn, shrewd face, devoid of charm, as the pioneer woman's face so often is, and she might have read a noble record of effort and self-forgetfulness. She might have guessed that the woman's passions were as vivid as her own, only not turned inward. The hardy little figure did express to Janet's mind women's clubs and speeches for equal rights; nothing more.

She knew no more of her heritage than a chicken still in the shell knows of the world outside that ivory sphere. She did not know that perforce she must some day be swept into a great company of women who had come to full sex-consciousness and who had extended their fierce mother-passion from their own families to the whole sisterhood. They wanted justice for the underpaid girl in factory and shop, and mercy for the criminal, the right to live under woman-made law as well as man-made law; they wanted real comradeship with the men they loved.

But Janet, walking musing under the bracing January air, wanted only the man she loved, and she thought of Charters as somehow a milestone on the road that must shorten one of these days.

IV

THE BEGINNING

SEVERAL days later Janet was walking across the campus when Charters joined her. Their friendship was progressing rapidly, but Charters did not regard it fatuously. He understood precisely what Janet meant now when her ardent eyes broke into welcome.

"It's an interesting world," he interpreted her, "and you are more real to me than a book. You open your own pages for me, and you know how to surprise me."

As he fell into step beside her Janet reflected that he was, indeed, the first man who had ever seemed to her real. A certain stern maidenliness in her had kept at a distance any acquaintance who might have ventured on sentimental passages. In holding herself untarnished for the one man of all the world she had not only shut out the experiences necessary to the emotional contentment of that attractive little vampire, Sallie Keyes, but she had also missed some sane friendships. Janet would have been astounded if she had realized that her attitude was egoistic; because she was prepared to give, she thought her capacity to love wonderful. She assumed that she considered it precious because the man would so consider it; in reality she valued it because it was her own. She was too untutored in life to know that love remains egoistic as long as it is concerned with receiving as well as with giving.

Charters shot a quick glance of appreciation at Janet's glowing face. Most of the people they met wore the drawn look of endurance that a sleet-storm in January

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engenders. But Janet's cheeks were smooth and red, and her eyes were wide and challenging.

"I love a day like this," she said, "when other people cower, because that somehow empties the world and gives you more elbow-room, and almost anything could happen."

"Could and does," he said. "Some of our fellows across the water are hatching a little scrap to waste a few thousand lives. Some more of our fellows on the west side are suffering because there is a drop of ten degrees in the thermometer. Presently, in our class up-stairs, a few girls (not men, take it from me) will feel that life is cheerless because a two-thousand-a-year professor assures them that they don't know how to write."

Janet laughed. At the same time she recognized fleetingly that even when Charters was talking in his jocular, colloquial fashion he gave one a sense of meaning beyond the personal, or beyond the particular concrete subject he might be touching. He had already shown her that for a young man his sympathies were wide and his sense of justice unjaded.

They entered the class-room together and sat side by side, watching the other students assemble. A woman came in whom Janet had noticed several times, partly because heretofore she had always arrived late. She was little and fair and pretty and perfectly dressed. For all her inexperience Janet recognized her at once as a person of social distinction. She had that faintly authoritative air that the girl knew in Bellamy, and which Cousin Lilius would have had if it had not been drained out of her by her feeling of economic dependence.

"I wonder who she is," Janet murmured to Charters. "She must do awfully good work, or else the professor would never be so patient with her when she interrupts him by coming ten minutes late."

"I bet you it's not her good work," returned Charters, grimly. "In all probability her work is rotten, and when

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the professor calls on her to tell what she thinks of a theme her criticism will be rotten and given with the greatest assurance. That's Mrs. Harrison Ryder."

"And who is Mrs. Harrison Ryder?" asked Janet.

"Oh, Lord! that's as bad as not knowing about my old man's settlement. Ryder has about twenty millions, and they even know the Eastern four hundred. For current details see the society column of any daily paper."

The professor called the roll, and Janet noticed that when he said "Miss Bellamy" Mrs. Ryder slightly lifted her head as if the name attracted her attention. A little later on the professor asked Janet for a criticism of a composition he had been reading. It was the first time she had been called on in class, and when she began to speak, as usual, all her listeners were impressed by her beautiful intonations. Even the professor was; here was a person who could go him one better on accent. Mrs. Ryder unobtrusively shifted her chair so that she was able to look at Janet.

When the class was dismissed she approached Janet with the obvious intention of speaking to her. And yet her manner had all the effect of being casual; it had the fine indifference of a woman whose approaches to one not in her own set are always overwelcomed.

"I wonder," she said, with a smile that was at once sweet and very formal, "if you are by any chance related to the Bellamys of County Tipperary? I thought I caught a touch of what Americans call the Dublin accent in your voice."

"My father is William Bellamy, once of Tullarone, County Tipperary," Janet said.

"My father was Cosgrave Bellamy—not of Tullarone; that was his grandfather's place. He was pitched over here when he was quite a young man."

"So was my father," said Janet, with her eager smile.

Mrs. Ryder at first took it to be over-joyous because she was being recognized by a powerful relative. But

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in a moment she read Janet more truly. The girl's young veins were beating with a sense of romance and adventure. Her father had told her a great deal about his life in Ireland and his own people, and now at last she had met a cousin; at last she was face to face with some one else to whom the word "Tullarone" was music. Anything wonderful could happen in a world which had permitted this romantic encounter. The older woman understood that Janet's fervor was characteristic, and not a testimony to her position.

"I have heard my father speak of his cousin Cosgrave," Janet added, "but he came to America at least twenty years before Father did."

Grace Ryder had a faint remembrance that William Bellamy had tried to look her father up and had not been too warmly received. To her blood was thicker than water. She estimated Janet's radiant face and splendid carriage, and decided that if she were properly dressed the girl would be distinguished-looking, if not beautiful. Her air changed subtly from the casual to the proprietary.

"You must tell me all about yourself," she said. "Will you come for a drive with me? Or may I drop you somewhere?"

"I should like to be dropped on the lake-front," Janet said. "I mean to take a long walk."

"A walk? In such weather?"

"We should be in County Tip," Janet replied.

"Yes; I hunt there sometimes. They do go out on beastly days," her cousin said, as they walked downstairs; "but, then, that's amusement. By the way, we sha'n't be alone. My secretary, Ada Sargent, will be with us."

At the foot of the first flight Janet saw waiting for them a woman who would have attracted attention anywhere. At some distance Janet merely noted that she had a figure so full of life that it seemed poised for flight, and that she wore high colors that gave her a look, some-

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how, of fire and victory. But as Janet drew closer she saw that the dark, beautiful face was worn and unsatisfied, and in the eyes was an expression showing that the fire lay choked in ashes and that the victory frequently died down in defeat.

"Ada's a dear," Mrs. Ryder said. "She is studying some political economy here while I take this writing course; but she goes in for it tremendously seriously; if I miss a day and she can't come she acts as if I had blighted her life."

Charters would have resented the fact that Mrs. Ryder quite obviously expected her social secretary to remain with her when her own whims or business kept her at home. But Janet, with her traditions, would have considered it quite natural that Miss Sargent should be at her employer's bidding.

Ada Sargent's greeting of Janet was very enthusiastic. She had friendships in abundance, for she was so demonstrative that people really believed she cared for them. But while she had a quick sympathy, a generosity of feeling, it was for all life rather than for any particular person. When people discovered that her affectionate words meant little, they forgave her because she was so interesting, so stimulating.

"After a chance like this," Ada said, "you could believe anything nice—that some one would leave you a million or that women will get the vote, and that factory-girls and shop-girls will some day have enough to live on."

Grace Ryder looked at her with a slightly mocking smile, reflecting that that speech was very characteristic of Ada. She would have liked money and power for herself, justice for all women, and comfort for the economically depressed. Grace always had the attitude of being amused at Ada's enthusiasm and interests, a little bored by her intensity, a little superior to her lack of repose. But her life would have lost its chief spice if she had lacked Ada. There was no one else in her household so thrillingly alive.

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They left the building, and Grace went to the curbstone, lifting her head in an unconsciously signaling manner. Charters would have said something resentful of the organization of society which made possible the quick, deferential response of her chauffeur. The man had really been quite comfortable during his wait, dividing his time between a newspaper and an amused observation of the wind-swept people passing to and from the buildings. Grace and Janet did not think about Grace's instinctive action; and if Ada did, it was only to wish that she had the right to that air of command.

"You must come soon and see my four little girls," Grace said, as they drove eastward. "Do you remember, Ada, when I have a free day?"

"You're dining out or else you have people in every night for the next week," Ada said. "And you have been neglecting your clubs so dreadfully that you were going to do them all up this week. Naturally, I haven't your engagement-book with me."

"I'll tell you to-morrow when I am free," said Grace. "I hope you can make the time coincide with your plans. I want to show you to my husband."

"I'll see that my time fits with yours," Janet said.

As she sat between the two her sense of life was very keen. She rejoiced in Grace Ryder, not only as a new-found relative, but as a delightful person to know. She savored with intense appreciation Grace's prettiness, her faint mockery, her elusiveness, realizing behind it a fund of strong feeling. She liked the sense she had of Grace's rich background. Ada Sargent she liked almost as much. With her heightened sensibility she divined in Ada some failure, some tragedy, some dreadful withdrawal that had given her face its wanting expression. Here was some one who, like herself, demanded to drink deep.

Janet was set down on the broad, wind-swept, and spray-swept stone walk that edged the lake. The car drove off, Ada waving as it turned. Janet looked after it for a mo-

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ment, her heart aglow. How rich her life was—her cousin, Ada Sargent, and Charters! She got a sudden picture of the little, piquant face of Sallie Keyes, and of Richard Wilson's wide-set, sea-blue eyes under a canopy of heavy, black curls. Except when she received a letter from Sallie she scarcely thought of either of these two, until she saw them during vacations, Sallie frequently, Wilson rarely.

"It's here, in Chicago, that my friendships will lie—and everything else," she thought, as she started southward for a swinging two-mile walk.

She was all alone except for the solitary figure of a man a mile away, bent against a strong east wind. It was not often in the city that Janet felt such a sense of wide spaces, of limitless distance. The thrill of it got into her blood. She took off her hat and let the wind do what it would with her hair. She wanted to sing, or shout, or dance, but the wind tore away her voice, and made impossible any rhythm of her feet. It was all she could do to walk, but she walked with fierce joy, glad of the battle. Most of her vitality she spent on her books, but it could not all go that way. There were times when there were obscure urges in her body which she did not in the least understand, and which needed such translations as they were now receiving in this fight with the wind.

The bent figure of the man approached. They meant to allow a margin of several feet with which to pass each other. But both miscalculated, and, besides, an unusually violent dash of wind almost wrenched Janet's hat away, and she made an unexpected sideways dart. The two collided. She gazed, startled, into a good-looking, rather sensitive face, ruddy and breathless from the wind; blue eyes, so deep that they were almost purple, gazed back at her deprecatingly, and he said in a crisp, rather light voice:

"I hope I didn't hurt you?"

"Not at all," she said.

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He looked at her, smiling. It was a smile that had a little quirk on the right side, which gave him the appearance of being more amused than he really ever was. He seemed to be about twenty-five, but at the moment there was an impish spirit in him aged three. Janet liked him at once. She would have liked to hold out her hands to him and dance down the stone walk, and she knew he would have liked it, too. They were all alone in the world of space and wind and waves. It seemed a pity that they could not play together.

She passed on; once she looked back, on the pretense of rescuing her hat from an especially windy blast. He had turned and was standing and looking after her. That night, when Janet went to bed, she murmured, as she always did, "My beloved, my beloved." It was a way she had, partly of wooing sleep, partly of soothing the torrent of feeling that possessed her. But on this night she added the petition, "Oh, my beloved, you are so long in coming."

V

THE FELLOW IN ENGLISH

NOT long afterward Janet saw him again. The professor in English announced that he found himself unable for a variety of reasons to read all the compositions submitted to him, and that Mr. Gregory, a Fellow in English, would assist him, and that afternoon would consult with and advise half the class about their work. Grace Ryder and Charters and Janet were among the half. There was a good deal of chagrin felt among some students put in Mr. Gregory's charge; they felt that a Fellow in English was not sufficiently important to take over the grave trust of criticizing their failures in writing. Charters was hopeful; he said that young men were often closer to real life than people like the professor, who had been longer in the academic atmosphere warranted to dry out the red corpuscles in a man's blood. Grace Ryder had no illusion about her work; she said she was only too pleased at having found another person who had to read it.

When Janet went into the consultation-room she saw that Gregory was the man whom she had encountered by the lake. Looked at standing by a desk, he was taller than he had seemed when he had been the plaything of the wind; he was quite six feet in height and sufficiently broad; his eyes seemed lighter, and his hair, which had been covered by his hat, she saw was a soft brown; the locks lay close together and snug against his forehead, rather like a trim cap. He evidently intended to preserve toward his students a manner of academic dignity, but

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when he recognized Janet his mouth wandered into his little, quirking smile.

"That was a bad wind," he said, boyishly.

"Very," returned Janet.

She handed him her composition, on which he had written a criticism in red ink signed with the initials "M. W. G." She wondered what "M" stood for. He read her name at the top of the composition and thought that "Janet" suited her wholesome, vivid face. He opened the pages and began to criticize her work in detail. At the end he summarized:

"I don't really think that you have any constructive power; the story falls all to pieces. The characters don't mean anything; they are just types. The setting is quite unreal."

"Oh! but then what is left?" cried Janet. "Nothing but a lot of meaningless words?"

"I shouldn't quite say that," he returned. "Here and there I see touches of very fine poetic feeling. I wonder if you have ever tried poetry?"

"Sometimes," confessed Janet.

She had written several poems to the beloved, and occasionally, when a rush of feeling overwhelmed her with which she scarcely knew how to cope, she unconsciously called to the beloved by reading her poems over and over. It was a vent similar to her emotional murmurings after she had gone to bed.

"I should like to see the poems," Gregory said; "I should rather expect them to have something in them."

"I never thought of doing anything with them," hesitated Janet.

Gregory supposed she did not want to take his valuable time by allowing him to judge her work.

"I'd like to see them, really," he said. "Of course, you are only doing them for practice, but one always begins that way."

"Thank you," said Janet, shyly.

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After all, no one need know that those poems were dedicated to the beloved. No matter how personal lyric poetry was, the reader was obliged to take for granted that it was not autobiography.

"Then suppose you bring them to me to-morrow," Gregory said, "at the end of the hour? I shall be busy with other students up to that time."

Janet thrilled with gratitude. She began to feel for Gregory the unquestioning admiration with which most of her instructors inspired her. Outside the consultation-room Charters joined her.

"Not so bad, is he?" he estimated. "All he lacks is a sense of humor. I think he must have Scotch blood in him."

"Couldn't he see your jokes?" asked Janet, cruelly.

"Of course he could see them; most intelligent men without humor have educated their minds so that they tingle a sort of bell when a joke is registered; but to see is one thing, and to appreciate is another."

"He has quite a nice smile," Janet said.

"Yes, and that smile must be a great asset for him, because it makes him look as if he could appreciate a joke. God help the people he teaches and lives with if I am right about him. A woman with no sense of humor is all right; she doesn't mind your laughing at her, and she gives you plenty of secret amusement. But you daren't often laugh at a man with no sense of humor, and nature has taken care that you'll never laugh with him."

"There are several other things in life besides laughing," suggested Janet.

"It's the best thing to live by," philosophized Charters. "Only a sense of it keeps me from telling you that there are going to be times when I shall feel like smashing the face of that man Gregory."

Janet laughed as they went down-stairs.

"Do they encourage violence in the law department?" she asked.

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"They tell you what happens when you express yourself freely," he returned, lightly.

They came out upon the campus, and as they were about to part Janet glanced up to receive a pathetic, strange impression of a young girl who was looking at her and Charters. She was probably a Russian Jewess, small and beautiful, with reddish-brown eyes capable of many expressions. It was easy to see that they could be inscrutable, perhaps hard, but that their characteristic expression was a stern kind of emotion. Her hair, dark-chestnut in color, was wound in heavy braids under a dark-green hat. Her face was colorless except for the bright, fine line of her eyes, and yet it was so full of meaning that it suggested color. She was dressed in a cheap, green gown, and her clothes made her appear what she was—an underpaid stenographer. But what struck Janet was a lightning expression that passed over her face as she looked at Charters to be instantly covered with a veil of stolid inscrutability. Janet shut her eyes and shivered; what she had seen was too intimate, too fierce, and too hopeless.

Charters lifted his hat with a smile of careless welcome.

"A stunning girl, this," he muttered hastily to Janet. "Tell you all about her sometime. Practically brought up in my dad's settlement! Come on and meet her. Hello, Sonya!" he added. "What brings you out here? This is Miss Bellamy, Miss Riborsky."

Janet held out her hand, which the girl took in a hard but rather unwelcoming clasp.

"Pleased to know you," she said, in a deep, throaty voice that somehow made Janet think of mournful singing and throbbing wood notes. "I am doing some work at night for one of the professors that works by the Hebrew department," she explained to Charters. "It is a sound book but dull."

"Miss Riborsky reads the deepest books in three or four

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of the hardest languages," Charters said. "She's a whole university all in herself."

"I envy you," Janet said; but her voice was a little patronizing, and Charters frowned involuntarily. "Good-by, Miss Riborsky," she added, "I turn here."

She nodded rather absently to Charters and went slowly homeward. Though not always observant, she was keenly sensitive, and Sonya Riborsky had left upon her a tragic impression which she could neither define nor dismiss. Not infrequently she came upon some somber figure which served to remind her that life often takes rather than gives, but there was something about this girl which suggested the struggle of more than an individual. Janet thought vaguely of the struggles of a whole class and of a whole sex. She was reminded of some of the remarks of Ada Sargent about the many things women wanted—things that had not necessarily anything to do with love. She was reminded of a shrewd-faced little worker for suffrage who had given up so much for her ideals. And she was vaguely uncomfortable and glad to get back to her landlady, imperturbable Mrs. Sessions, whose philosophy was that for some occult reasons of their own students sought out books and teachers, and that for perfectly practical reasons of her own she boarded and lodged them.

The next day, as she was on her way to show Gregory her poems, Charters stopped her to tell her about Sonya Riborsky. But Janet was full of her poems, and the tale, as it fell from his lips, struck her as commonplace and painful and typical. Sonya, one of a large family, had begun to work in a sweat-shop when she was ten, and had somehow got an education and had become a stenographer. She was supporting her mother and trying to help other girls of her race. As Charters told it the story had no meaning for Janet. He was chilled by her reception of it, understanding, however, that he had chosen a wrong moment.

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"There is something in the world besides Gregory and his criticism," he scoffed, bluntly, as he saw her eyes seeking the door of the consultation-room.

Janet smiled at him vaguely and opened the door, the hand that held the poems trembling a little. It was characteristic of her that as soon as he had begun to regard her poems as a product rather than as incense to the beloved she became anxious to hear Gregory say they were good.

He was not alone. He sat at a desk with a pile of compositions before him, and beside him sat a young woman who had occasionally been a classmate of Janet's. She was tall and slim and assured-looking, carefully dressed, and with a manner that seemed to announce to the world that it was really quite good of her to condescend to books. She was, perhaps, thirty years old, and Janet thought it fair to assume that she was trying the University after various other resources had failed her. Janet knew that she was a Miss Guyon, and she had been a little amused at her air of rather aggressive exclusiveness. She had not, however, given her much thought. Now, as she watched her, talking animatedly to Gregory, a slight feeling of disapproval stirred Janet. After all, a teacher was a teacher, she reflected naïvely, and a class-room was no place for social amenities.

Miss Guyon finally withdrew, taking Gregory with her to the door of the class-room. As he turned to greet Janet she was struck again with the trim, cap-like effect of his hair and with the charm of his quirking smile. That plain room, with its ugly yellow-varnished chairs and the shaft of late sunlight breaking across the blackboard, became a breathless temple to her. Gregory felt her hand tremble as she handed him her poems, and a thrill of gratified vanity smote him. He was rather a young man and heretofore not many people had taken his instructions very seriously. Certainly no good-looking girl had ever trembled before him.

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"Sit down, Miss Bellamy," he said, in a tone that was a trifle too kind, "and if you like I'll read your work while you wait."

There was no question that Janet did like. She sat down in one of the yellow chairs that creaked too volubly as it received her, and watched Gregory as he read her poems, too humble to resent the slightly pursed position of his mouth as he went over the papers, too serious to be amused at his attitude.

Her breathlessness was at least a more healthful kind of ego-spawn than the emotions which had given birth to the poems. No woman can fail to have her mind and will strengthened and her power of suffering weakened by a keen interest in her own work. Doubtless, work can never be so impersonal to a woman as it is to a man. When a man engenders a child, the creation becomes objective to him, while for months to a woman that child's creation becomes an absorbing subjective matter; when a woman creates work she puts into it the same tenacious personal quality. It can never quite detach itself in her mind from her personality and float as an entity in the world.

Janet palpitated in the yellow chair, and presently Gregory looked up and smiled approvingly at her.

"These poems, Miss Bellamy," he said, "are not without distinction of a sort."

Janet's face grew radiant. There is something essentially servile in the badly trained feminine mind. It is impressed by the academic habit of faint praise and understatement, carefully measured and graduated in order to maintain the "scientific spirit." Gregory was a young man of certain distinct enthusiasms. He could show feeling over a great poem or a great deed, but he had come very easily under academic conventions, and when he had assumed a critical attitude he found it difficult to be even relatively enthusiastic.

Gregory quite forgot the poems, for Janet was as

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challenging as a torch, with her amber eyes ardent, her red lips parted, her whole face eager and athirst. She was wearing a golden-brown dress that sent the mind back to the shadowed gold of her eyes. A more sophisticated person than Gregory would have seen that it was badly cut and badly put on. What Gregory said to himself with conscious fine balance was that Miss Bellamy was a promising student. But he keenly realized what a splendid piece of life she was as she sat in the yellow, creaking chair, and he felt the pulsing tide of youth and vitality in her, the hoard of secret and untouched passion that was throbbingly and innocently calling to some other youthful, unspent force somewhere in the world.

She rose, smiling, and held out her hands for the poems.

"It's so very nice of you to like them," she said. "So you think I ought to go on with it?"

"I don't say that," he returned, cautiously. "I don't know how permanent your impulse is."

The flame died out of Janet's face.

"Of course, it's only a beginning," she said, meekly.

"I was going for a walk by the lake," said Gregory, clumsily. "Will you come with me?"

Janet felt rather flattered; she was only a junior and he a near-instructor; he had almost the glamour of a professor. She smiled her assent, and presently they were swinging along toward the park, she so swimming in his faint praise of her work that she was unconscious of her footsteps.

It was a chill, still day in February that yet somehow held a hint of spring. The red-and-brown stems of the bushes that edged the park behind the lake-front contradicted the frost in the ground; the blue of the sky and the blue of the lake refused recognition to the tracings of ice that clung to the stone walk. Gregory and Janet held one of those conversations which are memorable only because they clear the way for a rapprochement of spirits. They talked about poetry and colleges and Scotland, which

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he had seen, and Ireland, which she had never seen. They forgot immediately what they said, and it was well worth forgetting.

Janet was at her best when she was walking. There was a winged victory then that sat in her brain and lent its urging to her usually controlled voice. She was likely to sweep along her companion, all unconsciously to both of them. It occasionally happens that the most potent element of a personality is not really representative of the character behind the personality. A woman with supreme self-confidence may make herself the center of a group, each one of whom may be really more significant than herself. Janet's lovely voice was the quality of her personality that chiefly pleased; and yet that calm voice was contradicted by every fiber of her unsophisticated, yearning self. Some of the most observing of those who knew her had felt that the voice was a great contrast to the outgoing, seeking impression on her face, to the impression she shot forth that her soul was on tiptoe waiting to seize something it wanted.

Gregory felt that he was sailing breathlessly in some delightfully stimulating air. Her mind was so quick to seize the points of what he was saying, and, like half the men in the world, he rather fancied his way of putting things; her eyes signaled her grasp of the end of the sentence before he had more than begun it; but this he took as a tribute to his own nimbleness of wit rather than to hers. And if occasionally he felt that they were racing too fast, that there was too much intensity, there was always her admirably controlled voice to remind him that they were a man and a girl who knew each other slightly taking the air on a brisk, winter day. Nevertheless, when they had gone some three miles, he felt as if he had been drinking a delicious, heady wine, and he wanted to repeat the experience.

VI

GRACE'S SETTING

THE next day Janet dined with the Ryders. Grace, who had been too much engaged to receive her before, sent a car for her; and Janet, peeping out of the window, was amused to see that the chauffeur, rightly estimating the social unimportance of the street upon which she lived, was reading a newspaper with his cap pushed back on his head. She was wearing a pale, rose-colored gown which she had made herself, and which, while it frankly advertised the amateur's touch, drew out her fine coloring, bringing the eye to rest with a pleasurable pause on her dark, soft hair.

As she came down-stairs she met Charters at the threshold of the building. He had come to leave a book for her, and, while he was glad of the charming picture she made, he somehow resented the car and the pleasant-looking chauffeur who dismounted as soon as Janet stepped into the street. He resented, too, Janet's unconsciousness as the chauffeur opened the door of the car for her with only a few shades less deference than he showed his mistress. Charters stood glowering in the doorway, resentfully understanding that the man's distinguished servility, so admirably graduated, was worth to him some fifty dollars a month. The chauffeur, for his part, read Charters, and his face expressed a great oblivion of the cubic space Charters was occupying.

Janet leaned back in the car, thoroughly enjoying her state of physical well-being. She liked the feel of the soft cushions and the silk of her sleeves and bosom, and

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the perfume of the roses hanging beside the door. She like the possessive feeling she had as she watched the chauffeur handling the wheel. But it was characteristic of her to idealize all her impressions, and she thought she was enjoying merely the beauty of the night—the high-pitched keen stars in the deep sky, and, below, the amethyst street-globes casting shadows on the white snow. There were plenty of other shadows which she did not see—men out of work too discouraged to go back to their waiting wives, tired women returning from factory and shop, motor-cars which passed her bearing men or women who were ill or sad. Janet felt only that life was good and was whispering that before long it would fulfil its promises to her.

The Harrison Ryder house was newly built. The plainness of outline, borrowed from an Italian palace for which the architect had a more than platonic affection, warned the observer that no future critic would ever dare say, "That was built in the days before poor, raw Chicago came into its esthetic own"; or, "That misplaced horror was boldly and accurately copied from a German palace by people who thought they had enough money to do as they pleased." The Ryder house said plainly to the world that it meant that there should be no inharmony between it and the flat ground it stood on and the great blue lake at its feet. Reserved and non-committal, its long, unbroken lines and perfect proportions assumed that the onlooker must take good taste for granted. In fact, the house subtly implied that it was symbolic of a good deal that must be taken for granted—such as a position of more than a generation's standing, which had been made the most of so as to achieve the perfect illusion of unshaken aristocracy. Perhaps the air of taking much for granted was the most significant characteristic of Grace Ryder's house.

Charters would have scorned the flunkeydom which surrounded Janet from the moment that the chauffeur rang

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the bell for her and the heavy oak door was opened by a man who received in wages almost twice what her allowance was. But Janet responded to the social requirements of the house; she took the man and another who hovered at the drawing-room door for granted. It was the sort of thing to which her father had been accustomed in Ireland; William Bellamy would have lived in just that style if he could have afforded it.

Grace's drawing-room was enormous. In a less skilful woman's hands it would have seemed like a museum with its huge, sixteenth-century rugs, great carven chests, and chairs and mantels, all antique and all magnificent. But Grace had contrived to make the room seem her individual haunt, without abating at all its magnificence. Janet felt this as she entered, and she also instinctively felt that the room was calculated somehow to expose any person who was inharmonious. Doubtless Miss Guyon, sitting with Grace, suggested that idea. Janet was not at all attracted to Ellen Guyon, and it was perhaps this lack of liking which made her reflect that the assurance which could carry on the campus seemed in Grace's drawing-room too insistent, almost nervous. She likewise reflected that he who ran might read that Ellen Guyon was looking for an Outlet, and that she wanted it with a capital letter.

"You've met my cousin, Miss Bellamy, haven't you, Ellen?" asked Grace. "Not? Miss Guyon, Miss Bellamy. I thought the University classes formed a kind of freemasonry."

Ellen Guyon's manner conveyed that the North Side had to be careful in its recognition of the South Side, but that Janet was now properly sponsored and the universe might roll on without perturbation.

"You're always in such a hurry out there," she said. "You miss ever so many pleasant people. It takes so long to go and come. I'd no idea it was so late, Mrs. Ryder."

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She took her leave, and Grace saw her through the doorway with a little shrug of distaste.

"I don't often say nasty things about my callers," she said; "at least, not till the front door shuts after them. But Ellen Guyon bores me, and always did ever since she was a little cheeky girl. Harrison Ryder's people and hers have had business relations for forty years, and in the old days they used to have social relations. In my opinion, Ellen and her mother aren't quite—quite—"

"Oh," laughed Janet, delightedly, "that's what Father and Cousin Liliass say. It's such a splendid short cut. But," she added, with a return to her intellectual standards, "Miss Guyon is really awfully clever; in class she recites in epigrams."

"Ellen would," agreed Grace. "And she'd sit up all the night before making them. Have you ever heard of the Levy, Schwartz and Guyon factory? It's the biggest clothing factory in Chicago. You'd think it was a Jew firm, and so it was, but my husband and Mr. Guyon own nearly all the stock. Harrison Ryder has as many financial interests as women hunting culture have mental interests. Do you like my house, dear?"

"It's beautiful, Cousin Grace."

"Call me 'Grace.' Ellen Guyon calls me 'Mrs. Ryder' on purpose to show how much younger she is than I am. Come up-stairs, Janet, and take your things off in my diggings."

They mounted the great staircase, and Grace led the way to a suite in blue, which again expressed her delicate sense of personal harmony. When Janet had removed her wraps Grace said:

"Now come along to the nursery. This is my hour with the children."

It was in the nursery that Janet got the first intimation of Grace's deeper nature. Janet tried to wear a mask herself; that is, whenever she thought of it she subdued as far as she could the eagerness of her eyes and kept her

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voice even. But she took other people's masks for the reality. Grace Ryder was a different woman from the moment that she opened the nursery door. Janet never forgot that picture of the white-and-blue room with filmy curtains and rose firelight, and four little girls looking up joyfully to greet their mother. Grace spoke to the children in her usual light, half-mocking way, and she was not especially demonstrative, but a world of tenderness looked out of her eyes. She forgot everything except the little ones. The children felt her attitude; and, while all but the youngest carefully imitated her restraint, it was plain that their hour with her was the golden hour of their day. They were lovely, slim little creatures, with their mother's coloring.

"How nice that they are girls," Janet said, drawing the youngest to her knees, whence the child gazed adoringly at her mother. "Girls give the sense of home more than boys do."

"Ah, I have sometimes wished they were all boys," said Grace, in a low tone, holding her baby close with a sudden, longing gesture. "Girls are not so well armored against life as boys. I am glad I have one boy at least," she added, with a change of tone. "It would never have done not to hand down Harrison Ryder's name."

She began to talk about her boy at school, and presently she got herself away from the reluctant arms of her children and went to change for dinner. Janet told stories to the children until Ada came in to say that dinner was served.

"It's informal to-night; and so I'm dining with the family," said Ada, in a tone half light, half bitter, as they went down-stairs.

Janet remembered having heard that Ada Sargent belonged to that rather numerous class of young women whose people had had money just long enough for them to be thoroughly helpless after they had lost it. The crash had come when Ada was eighteen, and ever since she had

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been earning her own living, largely by way of people who had been friends of her parents. Janet thought of Richard Wilson, who was in much the same position, and she reflected that she would have preferred his method of cutting adrift from the old life entirely and steering his little ship of life in new waters.

"Grace is a dear," said Ada, remorsefully, as if her words had jarred as much on her own ear as they had on Janet's. "She's heavenly good to me, and I'm too grateful for soft spots in life to mind the fact that I don't dine with her fashionables every night in the week."

In the library Grace and Harrison Ryder were waiting for them. Harrison Ryder was like his house—solid and plain in line. He had full, well-fed eyes with an alert glint in them, and a heavy, firm mouth, and thin hair that would have been gray if he had let it. His wife secretly hoped that the day would come when he would give up that particular contest with nature. The shining black of Ryder's hair was the symbol of a good many things of which she did not let herself think. Ryder's bearing and expression were those of the successful business man—one who has not merely inherited money, but who has also made it himself; one who is not merely the greatest part in a great machine, but is, rather, the whole machine. His sense of power was not born alone of the consciousness that other people recognized that he was a man of great fortune; it came from the secret belief that at any day and hour he could be stripped bare, and yet begin again and grind riches to any extent from the hoppers of the world.

Harrison Ryder liked young, fresh faces, and he looked at Janet approvingly.

"I always prefer to dine at home, and now I'm doubly glad I'm here," he said, with a heavy gallantry meant to include his wife and his guest.

It was characteristic of the fact that Janet's response to traditions and dreams was superior to her response to

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realities that the dinner seemed far more natural to her than the rather noisy dinners she shared with the students in Mrs. Sessions' apartment. She took so thoroughly for granted the expert service, the delicate cooking, and the beautiful china and silver, that she did not notice them at all. She fitted perfectly into the conversation, for even when it touched on topics with which she was unfamiliar her listening was intelligent. Once the talk turned on Richard Wilson, and she mentioned that she had met him.

"He's rather a dear," Grace said. "I knew him when he was in college; he's quite a bit my junior, but that didn't prevent our getting on well."

"Mistake he made to go away," Ryder said. "Some of the people that knew him would have started him in something. I heard a rumor that he was coming back."

"Really?" Grace asked. "Do you know when or why?"

"Probably to take care of his father; the old man's breaking, but he still keeps his seat in the Board of Trade, and has the hope he'll turn something yet. Old men like that ought to be eliminated, but I believe there's a little sentiment on the Board about him."

Ryder spoke with the brutality of the successful who want to sweep the weak out of the way. "Bad for business" is the slogan with which his type cover up all deeds that are ruthless and their womankind have been taught to echo.

"The poor, old man," said Ada. "He was so dreadfully disappointed in his oldest son. He drank himself to death," she explained to Janet, "and before that a girl committed suicide because he jilted her."

"Oh!" cried Janet, horrified.

"If he'd married her she'd have suffered a lot," said Ada, philosophically. "He was the worst sort of egoist. He would have drained all her juices of tenderness and youth and beauty, and then he'd have thrown her away."

There was a certain hardness in Ada's face as she spoke,

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a challenge, as if she were saying to the world of men, "Hurt other women, if you can; you sha'n't hurt me." Into Ryder's full eyes, as he looked at her, there crept a new shade of interest.

"Perhaps it was better for her to die if he was so unworthy," said Janet. "If she had lived her soul would have died."

Harrison Ryder turned his full eyes on his wife's young cousin, and his glance plainly rated her as a sentimentalist with exhausting pages to learn. Ada laughed and said lightly:

"Dear child, her soul would have come alive, and she would have loved some one else, and maybe she would have had sense enough not to feed herself so wholly to the second as she did to the first."

Janet missed the significant look Ryder fastened on Ada. She was marveling that any one could really believe that love would come twice in a life. Grace, however, had not missed the look.

"A sharp experience doesn't always teach a woman how not to give herself too fully, Ada," she said. "That's the tiresome quality about a second great devotion; it often takes quite as much out of one as the first did."

"The only safe way," Ada said, as Grace rose, "is not to love at all. Let a man love you, and you starve him as he has starved other women, and then he'll adore you."

Ryder laughed as they left him to take their coffee in the library, and again he fixed an interested look on Ada. He had never before heard her speak of love, and, like almost any man nearing fifty and anxious not quite to relinquish youth, he was always ready to listen when a good-looking woman expressed her opinion on any phase of the great emotion.

In the library Janet sat with her wide, amber eyes fixed on Grace and Ada, listening to talk that was subtly jarring. Grace once or twice lowered her eyes when Ada addressed her, and her answers were rather restrained.

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It seemed to Janet that what they said implied that life was full of hideous discords which must be ignored or passed over lightly, certainly not complained of, and of course accepted. They alluded to various women, all of whom seemed to be unhappy—those Grace spoke of, because their husbands were dead or unfaithful or abhorrent; those Ada spoke of, because they were poor or sick or out of work, or restless from having nothing with which to occupy their minds. From neither of the two was there a sentence which fitted in with Janet's conception of the ennobling or exhilarating or purging power of love. Love as they assumed it seemed either non-existent or a breeder of pain. She could not help wondering what their experiences had been that they could trust life so little. Yet, although the two talked as if they could accept unfortunate facts, in reality they did not; for all their sophisticated surface they were as capable of being bruised as the untutored Janet. They needed love; and despite their interest, especially Ada's, in the great revolt of women, they had not learned that a woman is only strong when she is capable of giving a great love, and yet can do honest and sound work in the world without being loved.

Meanwhile, Janet was grieved because they talked as if love were something that came almost with the seasons, and again as if it were a game. She was glad when Ryder entered, rather with the air of a casual visitor in his own library, and sat beside Ada, again with the new look of interest in his eyes.

When Ryder was taking Janet out to the car Grace remarked to Ada:

"She's a dear, isn't she? You don't know what a relief her voice is to my ear. I'm going to give her some clothes."

"You'd better give her some food for her mind," Ada said. "If she were as *gauche* in her manners as she is in the way she moves around mentally, you'd have none of her, Grace."

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"I think she talks very well; not too much, that is, and she gives one the impression of having a hidden kind of force."

"Hidden!" cried Ada, with her quick sympathy. "Why, she's one flaming torch inside. Life is going to hurt that girl terribly. It makes me want to take care of her."

"Ah, me," sighed Grace; "among other things, life has taught me that no one woman can really take care of any other—not even a mother her child. Her deepest wounds a woman bears alone—hides, if she can. The blessed woman is she who has a devoted, understanding man to take care of her, and such women are frequently the most unsympathetic toward those of us who don't get what we want."

"Yes," responded Ada, turning her ready sympathy from Janet to Grace; "and the rest of us struggle along half fed. Oh, I think men are—Grace, the only way a woman can meet the average man on equal terms is to be away above the average; if she is rich, beautiful, charming, brilliant, and indifferent, a man can't hurt her, and she will be happy; otherwise she will suffer."

Meanwhile Janet was rolling homeward in the car, supremely content with her evening, thinking in a broken, aimless way of Grace's face as she had sat among her children, of the curved line of Ryder's waistcoat, of Ada's long lashes as they quivered just before she spoke. Through her broken half-thoughts or pictures floated the remembrance of Charters' disapproving face when she had entered the car, Gregory's close-laid hair and quirking smile, and, strangely, the wide-set, sea-blue eyes of Richard Wilson.

Suddenly she heard again Grace's voice as she had drawn her baby close to her and said in a poignant voice:

"Girls are not so well armored against life as boys."

Janet's eyes grew wide in a sudden, pitying comprehension. Life had hurt Grace deeply, and she was seek-

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ing to forget it in five children, in women's clubs, in various uplift movements, in making for herself petty, daily engagements which must not be broken. A sudden chill struck Janet. Grace was rich, beautiful, charming, rare, the type born to rule—yet life had not been good to her. What if life were cruel to Janet? The beloved—what if he never came?

The car drove on through the soft, white snow, the amethyst lights made soft shadows, and the world was still and beautiful. But the girl sat terror-stricken at the thought that love might never reach her, that she might never have home and children. For the first time she thought of the many unmarried women in the world. Ada would have thought of them as wanting justice, since love was not to be had; but Janet thought of them only as wanting love.

"Oh, but they can't have wanted love as I do," she cried, inwardly, "or somehow they would have got it. It *must* come to me!"

VII

A LOVER

JANET was concerned that winter far more with her friends than with her books. She continued to see a good deal of Grace and of Ada. Charters had graduated from the law-school, and had begun a meager practice, living on the West Side. He came frequently to call, but naturally their daily meetings on the campus ceased. Gregory she saw a good deal of. She lost some of the awe she had felt for him as a near-instructor, not because they had drifted into friendship, but rather because she discovered that the only choice thing about Gregory was such scholarship as he had. She was rather disconcerted at a social rawness he sometimes showed. For all her inexperience, no phase of convention, however delicate and indirect, could strike her as in any way alien to her.

Gregory was quite capable of sitting in a room full of people, talking well and easily, and at the same time wrapping and unwrapping about his long forefinger a dark-blue silk handkerchief with a purple border, the whole rather crushed. When the day came that Janet asked him to burn it and thereafter use white handkerchiefs, he agreed, but he wanted it understood that it was because he chose to please her, and for no other reason. Gregory was rather keen on pointing out to life that he meant to do as he chose. This trait Janet put down to his Scotch blood; being of Irish ancestry, she had a shrewd eye for Scotch deficiencies.

"My mother," he told her once, "came to this country

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when she was sixteen with a Scotch family who were emigrating. She really was a kind of servant."

He spoke with a mixture of gentleness and defiance. The gentleness was for his mother; the defiance was for Janet, who had just been saying that, of course, servants should wear caps, and that Gregory's notion that a maid could take her meals with the family without creating domestic confusion was impossible. It was Janet's conviction that, even if the family could be comfortable, the maid could not.

"But she wasn't—wasn't one in spirit," Janet said, "or else things would not have turned out as they have."

He knew that she meant by this that his mother could not have produced such a competent creature as himself if she had not had in her soul the germs of true greatness.

The American belief that next to money knowledge will help a man to success is very well founded. All over this country there are youths uncouth socially, coming from very humble people who shoulder their way through high school and into college, all unlearned in the amenities. Their brains develop first, and after a time their manners. If only such a one happens to be good-looking and is shrewd enough to remain unmarried for a considerable length of time, moving through one stratum after another of girls and women, each a little bit more sophisticated socially than the preceding, he may at last, with or without cruelty to other women, as circumstances may decide, marry a lame duck—some girl of position or money who has not found any one in her own set who wanted to marry her, and who makes herself content with this intellectual climber. Externally, his brains are supposed to offset her money or social connections, but the world generally considers that he has done very well for himself, and that she was, on the whole, sensible in taking him. In their own intimacies of intercourse the couple talk in terms of soul and devotion, and not in terms of money and brains; and the bride weans him away from his own people.

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Gregory's people were quite humble farmers. He had not even known how to hold his fork correctly until he had gone to college, where he had also picked up a few other fundamental points in manners. When Janet met him he had been for three years a graduate student; he had made some friends who had been gently bred, and he considered himself quite adequate socially. He did not at all realize that he was just at the point where watchful matrons would say of him that he had possibilities; that a tactful wife could make something of him.

The exhibition of naïveté which most disturbed Janet occurred after a call he had made on Ellen Guyon. Giving Janet his impressions of the call, he added:

"They live very well; they seem to have a butler and an inside man."

There was the faintest flavor of satisfied awe in his tone, as if he had somehow taken a step upward in his own estimation because he could be on friendly terms with people who kept men-servants. Charters was more colloquial than Gregory would ever have permitted himself to be; he would have taken the butler and the houseman for granted, and, in a sufficiently ribald mood, would have winked at them as fellow-men. He would have asserted that he found them more interesting than he did old Guyon, but he could not have been impressed by them or by anything else. His was not the kind of democracy that would flaunt the fact of his mother's having been a maid-servant, and the world might do as it pleased about it; but, on the other hand, nothing would have induced him to keep a butler on his premises. Gregory was the sort who is first impressed by the butler and then acquires him; he was the kind which learns to put away its native democracy.

But if Janet was occasionally disturbed by such flaws in Gregory's furnishings, she soon learned to excuse them under the indulgent term of "boyishness," and afterward to cease to notice them. For he had so many likable

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qualities, she thought; after the first shell of his bookishness had been cracked he revealed so many noble enthusiasms, so many ardors of attachment and appreciation and a capacity for hero-worship that responded to her own intensities of spirit. He knew nothing, or at least spoke nothing, of the great movements that absorbed Ada Sargent and interested Grace Ryder and Charters; but this made him all the more concentrated upon what he did care for, all the richer in what he could offer Janet.

On the first night of spring Janet sat by the window, rather lured by the call, wondering what she should do with her evening. Mrs. Sessions came heavily down the hall to tell her that Charters was calling. That meant a walk, for, though Mrs. Sessions had a microscopic reception-room, it was almost sure to be pre-empted by some other couple who would look on Janet and Charters as intentional intruders; or, if the two were there first, the couple which had been ousted by anticipation would gaze in with large, reproachful eyes like two peri hopelessly outside Paradise. Janet put on her wraps, preferring the wide welcome of the lake-front.

The first night of spring has a subtle manner of her own. She comes softly, graciously, like a great lady; yet she is nothing but a calculating jade who knows her power over people because there is no rival near her, and her freshness makes one believe that no rival can ever come. We think we are welcoming her as willing hosts; but, really, she is taking us in, doing as she will with us. She relights a fading love—at least for a time; she puts her inscrutable lips to a waning flame and makes it a pillar of fire that may destroy or purify—that is beyond her saying. She puts a satyr's mischievous heel into what was a pure matter enough; she tears what was wry and harmful out of a passion, and turns its eating edge to tenderness. She turns the peace of supposed renunciation into an agony of craving; she makes those who have lost feel more intensely their pain. She makes a hope-

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lessly longing heart drearier, for nothing is harder to bear than the sounds and sights of the first of spring if one is unhappy. She calls up joyous memories to make the sad yet more sad, and she contrives that these same memories make happy people yet more happy. She is the spring of the spring, the first youth of the young year, and she has done her work so many millions of times that she could not possibly muddle it.

As Janet and Charters walked beside the lake, the girl felt the compelling touch of this first spring night. She looked at the broad water she had seen under so many different phases, and it had never seemed so lovely. The moon was so clear that she could feel the hidden blueness of the sky. The wide black and gold reflection on the water shimmered like the wings of a flood of feathered creatures pulsing with life. The waves washed gently beside the stones. Against the wide road which followed the curve of the stone walk stood out, clearly defined, the waiting branches of the trees and bushes. One could almost hear the sap singing in them and little buds asking to be born.

Most of the couples they saw were strolling, for the first night of spring generally puts laggard paces into people's feet. But Janet had the impulse to walk fast. There was something in her spirit that wanted to catch up with—she did not know what. It was as if this maiden of spring held in her arms something that was Janet's, and must be overtaken if the girl were to have her own.

"What's your cast-iron hurry?" asked Charters.

"Am I running? I don't know," Janet said, slackening her pace. But presently she was hurrying again.

"I'll make a bargain with you," Charters said. "I'll race as fast as you like up to La Rabida and to that little stretch of sand and stone beyond. Then we'll sit down and treat the scene with the poise and attention it deserves."

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"That's quite all right," Janet agreed. "I'll be tired by the time we've done that mile and a half."

They spoke very little as they walked. Janet looked with a rather amused sympathy at the various couples as they passed.

"They seem so unbraced, somehow," she said.

"They're living," replied Charters, briefly.

When they were sitting upon the only bench on the little stretch of sand behind the building which reproduced the size and somewhat of the illusion of the old Spanish convent it imitated, Janet harked back to Charters' latest remark.

"You seem to consider that living matters so much," she said. "Or, rather, I mean you seem to think that one minute is about as much worth while as any other minute."

"No; I don't think that," he said. "For example, this minute is much more to me than the ones I spent walking up Drexel Avenue, or the one when Mrs. Sessions eyed me suspiciously through the crack of the front door."

"You see, a man who said he was the gas inspector came in and robbed her," explained Janet. "Her impulse now, even if she knows you, is to think that somehow you stole that familiar face you are wearing, and are coming in to 'do' her."

The conversation was slipping out of Charters' hands, and from the moment they had sat down he had meant to control it.

"What I meant by what I said about living," he began, slowly, "is—well, to put it personally, I've had my bad hours and I've had my good hours, but I've never felt bored and I've never felt asleep. Every fight I've ever had has been worth while whether I've won or lost. And I never looked on victory as my God-given right, nor did I despise it because I had won it. I gloated over it and got everything out of it I could. A man wastes himself if he is asleep or bored."

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"I don't know that I have had any really bad hours," said Janet, slowly; "at least, not since my mother died, and then I was a very little girl. Of course, I've had disappointments and deprivations, as who hasn't? Little things I wanted at home. But any big thing I wanted has always been given me."

"You mean you went out and got it. That would be your way," Charters said.

"Do I go out and get things?" questioned Janet. "Well, perhaps I do. Only I don't think I've ever made any one else pay for what I've wanted. When you spoke in that way of 'getting' it almost made me feel as if 'getting' meant taking from some one else."

"I don't think you'd build your joy on any one else's pain—not if you knew it," Charters said, musingly.

"That would be cruel."

"Well, I guess most of us have to be cruel some time or other," said Charters; and there was a foreboding note in his voice.

"Somehow, I had never thought of you as having very bad times," Janet said.

"It doesn't do to remember them," Charters replied; "but I have. I lost my mother and sister in that Iroquois fire; I've had to earn my own living since I was seventeen; I've had tedious and painful illnesses. But I've a good mind and a good job and plenty of friends. In short, I've lived about the life of the average person."

Janet thought of her father and Cousin Lilius. So far as she knew no deep sorrow had ever come to them; she forgot to count her mother's death; she did not know of her cousin's unhappy love. Janet had an impatient sense that trouble did not matter if only one held the hand of the beloved. It did not occur to her that Bellamy and Cousin Lilius were not holding the hand of a beloved. Janet's logic was faulty; it read that if one had the beloved, then trouble was not trouble at all, and it blinked at the fact that a good many people never see the face of the beloved.

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Charters seemed to her to be taking no account of love and of its salving power.

"Do you think," began Janet, "that the average man has so much—"

"There's no method yet invented for holding off sickness and death, poverty and disgrace," said Charters. "All those people we passed just now—you called them unbraced. I suppose there isn't one of them that hasn't been hit hard; that hasn't wished he was dead, or contemplated suicide, maybe, or felt that he could never get up and face the next day. Yet here they are, all with something they like to live for."

"I suppose," Janet said, "that working on a newspaper the way you used to before you studied law gave you a great sense of people?"

Charters smiled. He thought of some of his newspaper associates who regarded people as so much spawn, and persons as instruments by which they got what they needed for their paper and for themselves. Then Charters' smile died. All that they had been saying was so out of key with what he wanted to say. He remained silent, and Janet did not speak. While their words had run on, the first night of spring had had to retreat with her witcheries into the background. But now she drew near to them with her lures; she arched for them the splendid moon-ridden dome of the sky; she spread the waters at their feet, broken by that breathless golden quiver of reflection; she sent them the subdued and spiritualized voices of the city—the muffled sound of feet, the softened warning of a car, the muted notes of talk and laughter.

"It is—a night of nights," Charters said.

"It's beautiful," she breathed.

"I wish," he said, "Janet—"

She turned toward him, surprised. He had not used her Christian name before.

"Do you know I love you, Janet?" he said.

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For a moment his words carried no meaning to her mind. Often and often she had wondered how the beloved would first address her. She had thought of him as perhaps using just those words. But as they came to her from the lips of Charters their sense was jangled, for he was not the beloved. For a moment she felt as if he had robbed her, had plagiarized from the sweetness of an hour that was to have been of all hours the most sweet.

In her stern, ignorant young code Janet had thought that no girl should ever let herself be proposed to by any one but the beloved; if she did, she cheated him and stained herself. Besides, there was the pain to the unbeloved; but this sang rather small in her scale of values. Charters' declaration was a distinct surprise. She had liked him much as she had liked Grace Ryder and Ada. These three stood out specially among her friends; indeed, they had first made her realize that there was a half-way place between the region of mere acquaintanceship and the region of the beloved, and this was the pleasant state of friendship. Janet knew that, except for Sallie Keyes, she had had no real friends but these three and Gregory. Her own attitude toward Charters was completely defined to her, and she had assumed that he gave no more than she did herself. For all her dreams of love, knowing little about it, she had not been able to read the countless signs that would have told her that Charters loved her.

Now she had a retrospective illumination. She looked back over a tiny series of events that ought to have warned her. Just such milestones in the progress of feeling were catalogued in the novels she read. In print she understood what these were leading to, because her literary senses had been trained to know when to expect the various crises in feeling. In the books she could feel them coming before they came. The very fact that she was aware that nothing had been happening for a chapter or two, and that it was time for an emotional scene, should have warned her that novels are only symbols of reality,

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and not reality, a method of putting forward a conventionally shaped section of life, but not life itself.

Janet looked out across the waters, her brows contracted. And suddenly she had a quick, shattering vision of Sonya Riborsky's face as she had seen it first, as if leaning toward Charters—that tragic, calling face, the fire of it dulled immediately after by an expression of patient non-expectancy. Janet shivered a little, and her tone was the keener when she murmured:

"I am sorry; indeed, I did not know."

"You're sorry?" The note of foreboding had come back into his voice.

"I thought we were just friends."

Janet spoke painfully. He had been telling her that life had not been too easy for him, and now she was giving him a fresh grief. But even as she thought this she remembered his serviceable philosophy; to him pain was life as well as joy. Besides, was there not a compensation in mere loving? While she tingled with regret and embarrassment, the moment to Janet was not without its compensations.

"But—you're sorry?" Charters repeated.

"Oh—but very sorry."

"That means you don't care."

Janet was on the point of saying that she wished she did care. But that was not true; she did not want to care for any one but the beloved. Charters was not the beloved, and in her fierce, childish loyalty to that shadowy lover, she would not wish to put any concrete person in his place.

"I'm so very sorry," she repeated.

"You don't care," he said, in an unsteady tone. It was as if he were trying to convince himself by reasoning aloud about his case. "I was afraid you mightn't. Somehow, I started out here to-night with a lot of hope. I don't know just why. Maybe because I've been doing good work lately—for the reason that I love you; maybe

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because I'm young and well; maybe merely because I am hopeful by temperament. But the hope faded when we were racing down here to La Rabida. There is something so unsentimental about you."

He paused meditatively.

"No, there isn't; you are sentimental," he corrected himself. "I've seen you grow almost mawkish over a poem. I am afraid I mean that you are just unsentimental about me."

"If I'd only known," said Janet. "If there had only been some way by which I could have shown you before it was too late—"

"I should have thought the whole city might have read my feelings," he said, ruefully.

"I didn't dream—"

"I'm sure you didn't, Janet; and if you had, I doubt if you could have stopped it. For one thing, it's a pretty big love. For another, I doubt if men and women who are in love have the strength of will and mind to dam it up. Things have to run their course."

Janet did not speak; she had a sense of relief, as if he had justified her to herself.

"But Janet," he went on, "that you don't love me now is not necessarily the end, is it?"

"But—but I don't love you," she repeated.

In spite of his disappointment he laughed a little.

"Janet, I believe you are more than sentimental. Surely you cannot believe that one man and one woman are made for each other only, and that from their cradles they start rolling toward each other, and when they meet a peal of temple-bells clashes in their souls so that they recognize each other—"

Janet colored; she had indeed believed something like that, but his words put the belief in a ridiculous light.

"It seems to take away something from the value of my declaration, if it has any value," said Charters, mournfully, "for me to tell you that, while I feel as if I

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never could have loved any one but you, yet I know that there must be two or three other girls, any one of whom I might have loved if I had not seen you."

He was quite right; Janet at once began to under-rate his capacity for love, and to assume that a man who took love so practically would soon recover from the disappointment of a rejection.

"What I'm paving the way for is this," Charters went on. "Often a woman grows to care for a man after a while if he is only faithful and devoted enough. You mustn't think that because that peal of bells hasn't rung for me that I'm sure not to be the right man. Time makes such a difference in things—"

"Oh, I'm sorry," Janet said, pitifully; "but it couldn't ever be. I don't know why I don't love you. No one could be more lovable—if only I felt about you that way. I like you. I like your mind and your bravery and all your good qualities. I can see how happy you will make your wife. Only—for me it simply cannot be."

"You seem mighty sure," he said, with a touch of bitterness in his tone.

"I am speaking definitely because I shouldn't want you to be hurt by hoping," Janet said. "I couldn't be mistaken, not only in my present feeling, but in my incapacity for changing it."

He got up slowly.

"Let's go back," he said. "All this—it hasn't any meaning now."

They walked slowly northward. The path of the moon had shifted, and the water lay dark before them. The couples had found benches, or were risking sitting on the bare stones. Bodies were inclined toward each other and hands were clasped. The first night of spring had given Charters nothing, and it had taken away from him for some time to come his peace of mind; it had given Janet a mood of distress and uncertainty. But to other couples the first night of spring had brought a unity of mood and

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of feeling; perhaps it was only temporary, but the temporary is all that the minions of nature care for.

"Oh, I wish, I wish—" cried Janet.

"I've just got to face it," he said. "I'm not such a fool that I don't know what a help time is, even if I can't feel it at this moment. There's my work, too; thank the Lord for work."

Janet vaguely felt that something was lacking. If she had not been steeped through and through with sentimentality, and at the same time if she had not been so thoroughly sincere, she would have realized that she was expecting him to talk as the rejected lovers talk in the novels. Such a one always spoke of the greatness and depth of the experience. He said that he would not have chosen not to love her; that having known and loved her was an inspiration that would light all his years, give meaning to his life. He said that he would live to serve her, and he had almost the air of desiring a successful rival so that he could step away dramatically and be noble in the background. He rarely married, and if he did, he chose some woman who didn't recognize dregs when they were offered her, and to whom he was very kind. But Charters was talking of work!

All this was most nebulously in the back of Janet's mind. Yet it accounted for a certain sense of incompleteness she felt. But larger than this—for with all her self-centeredness Janet had within her the elements of a thoroughbred and disciplined soul—larger than this was the longing to aid, to cure, the futile wish to turn back time, the sincere conviction that she would be willing herself to pay heavily if only Charters need not be hurt.

Over and over to himself Charters was saying like a refrain:

"I must work—work—work—work—work."

So they went back with the beautiful night dead between them.

VIII

JANET HEARS THE VOICE

WHEN Janet returned to the dull little flat in the dull row of apartments that sheltered on this spring night so many beating ambitions, so many satisfactions and despairs, she went at once to bed. There was a conviction about Charters' emotion which stirred her to a revolt against its futility. Why should there be such waste? Janet might have been observing human waste for years, but an emotion had to touch her personally before she could realize the bearing of a similar emotion in the lives of others. There are untouched people who can stand apart and watch the world, and understand the meaning of its pulses and sympathize. But most people have to be worsted by life at various points before they really receive the spiritual certificates which justify them in judging others, and the more they understand and sympathize, the more chary they are of judgment.

As she lay on her pillows regretting the pain of Charters, Janet discovered that her sympathy was shot through with a little base feeling of satisfaction. She denied it; she minimized it; but there is was—a kind of cheap pride that a man loved her. It seemed to enhance her value as the possession of the beloved. Another had desired her, but she was waiting for the real lover. She was sorry for any one who chose to accept the small change of love. She remembered what Mrs. Sessions, her landlady, had said of her own marriage.

"I had two beaux," thus the woman had put forth her experience; "they had equally good jobs, the same wages,

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and, as far as I could tell, the same chances in life. One was as good-looking as the other, and, as far as I knew, neither of them had bad habits. I just couldn't decide between them, till one day I heard one of them snapping at his mother. I thought that meant bad temper, and I took the other. I found afterward that Mr. Sessions wouldn't have been above snapping at his mother if he had had one. But on the whole, I made a good choice. That is, I never have repented, and when a woman can say that she's handing out a real testimonial."

Fancy having that kind of love, Janet thought; it was not love at all if one could hesitate between two men as if afraid of making a bad bargain. As if there were ever a bargain in love! But if there must be waste, there must also be bargains. If only Charters had not loved her! And yet love must make its first appearance masked as friendship. The revelation of love may come to a girl in countless ways, subtle or violent, with indefinite, half-suspected approaches, or with direct, volleying entrance. Our stupid education of girls only too frequently puts them in the position of waiting fearfully for the proposals of the men they love. Instead of teaching them that it is time they stopped their illiberal, age-old instinct of making love the only end in life, and instead of showing them how to admit man's interests, such as work and politics and bodily games, we train them in schools and at home in such a way that their minds turn inward to love. We tell them that the man pursues in love, and the woman sits passive; and at the same time we make their clothes and manners not only lures for attracting, but means also for pursuing. We say to them that no nice girl is hoping that a certain man will propose; she never thinks of loving him until he asks her if she will. We do not attempt to explain the impossibility of not knowing that a man is going to propose, and at the same time being plunged into love when he does. Thus we engender shifting and deceit. Rationally, according to

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this scheme, a girl should suspend her feeling, should be quite cold when a man proposes, and should then slowly let herself be led into love. But this is impossible because it is impractical. Thus, on account of our clumsy methods, a young girl must steer her little ship of self amid a terribly risky sea; sometimes she is clever enough to have worked out safe methods of her own; if she is shipwrecked, however, it is often our fault, but she may never have the satisfaction of telling us so, for she has to pretend that she is not shipwrecked.

Janet could not have told on this evening why it was that a terrifying, shaming, joyful knowledge came to her; but the spirit of the first night of spring could have told. All Janet knew was that as she was slipping into sleep, wondering why a lover must wear the disguise of a friend, she thought electrically of another friend, of Mark Gregory, and she knew that for her he was the beloved. At first she felt confusion and shame; for all her definiteness about the beloved, for all the conversations she had held in fancy with him, the shades of emotion that she was reserving to explain to him, there were jumps which her imagination had always made. She had never fancied what the long or short progression to the stage of love might be; indeed, she had merely thought of the love as there, as waiting to be spoken; and now had come this shaming miracle; all by herself, all without his words, she found herself loving Gregory. She was horrified that she was giving so fully to a man who had not asked.

Oh, but he must ask. Janet shied away from that thought, for here our false teachings of the decencies in love fell blighting upon her. "Nice" girls did not stand ready to give before they knew the gift was welcome. Janet felt herself to be capable of a great and burning love. All she meant by "burning" was that it would scorch everything else out of her life except the beloved. She knew that her devotion would be as perfect as it was overpowering. She did not attempt to reconcile the

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sweeping power of this love with the fact that a "nice" girl ought not to know anything about it till it was in demand; she was so ignorant of life and love for all her brooding on them—or, rather, on it, for she considered them the same thing—that she did not even realize that there was lack of reconciliation.

She simply lay and quivered with fear, and with joy, too, for it was wonderful to love at last. It was as if some stifling cap had been taken off the vent of her soul and now she could flow and flow forever with long, happy suspirations. She thought of him with terrified joy—that soft, close-lying brown hair, touching so crisply his temples and forehead and neck; there it lay, sharply defined, uncompromising, just like his mind. She thought of his keen, blue eyes, and she tried to remember if they had softened for her. She saw the whimsical, quirking smile, and she wanted to trace the line of it with her finger, and she blushed and was joyous with the desire.

She wished at once to think of him and not to think of him. If she thought of him, she must assume that he loved her. How could he help it when she loved him so much? Already her love for him seemed to her of very long standing. And so it was; it had been developing as long as she had been reading novels. It was love of love; it was love seeking for an object, but poor Janet did not know this; she thought it was love treasured for this special object. She had an enormous idea of the worth of it, because it was great and pure, not knowing that in this imperfect world love is worth while only as it is desired.

Humble before Gregory because she loved him, and yet vainglorious in the strength of her love, she caught her breath in unspeakable pain at the mere thought that perhaps he did not love her. Sharp as the pain was, it taught her nothing; she could not bear it, could not face life without him. If her love were real, it was a correspondence of his for her. It was real—therefore, all she

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need do was to wait. Yet how wait; and oh, how act? How could she look at him and speak to him, knowing this?

Janet began to plan what she must do and say, how to be natural and spontaneous, as she always had been, with this wonderful, tormenting knowledge. He must not suspect till his own love was ready to pour itself out. Although she did not understand it so, Janet was really laying plans for the kind of emotional pursuit permitted girls; to seem passive whether she was or not; to restrain her outgiving impulse. In short, she was planning to get this man for her own without seeming to.

"I wonder why," she said, in joyful musing, "why it should be just this man of all the world?"

Only nature could have answered that. Charters was not so good-looking as Gregory, but his mind was quite as good; so far as such a comparison could be made he had even achieved more; his experience was wider and his sympathies keener. But Janet did not know this. To her Gregory was much Charters' superior. She would have felt that even if she had not loved him, because Gregory was dealing with the academic world, for which she had an almost absurd reverence, a reverence as great in its way as her veneration for love. He and she had more in common than she and Charters. Yet had she considered Gregory the intellectual inferior of Charters, it would have made no difference in her attitude toward Gregory. Naïvely she would have felt that her love was so great that it would make her beloved the superior of other men. She was herself feeling the emotions which he should feel. That was because she had had for so many years her dreams of love and had anticipated the emotions of both of the lovers.

And always she came back to the wonder of loving Gregory and the wonder of love at last. It was marvelous that Gregory should be in the same world with her, that he and she should have met, that life should have been at

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length fulfilling its promises to her. And all this wonder was shot through with flashes of terror. What if something should happen? What if he should die before he could tell her that he loved her? What if her love for him should be as great a mistake as Charters' was for her? Only that couldn't be. And she anticipated that terrified thrill when she should first see him face to face again.

But they met so unexpectedly and hastily that there was no thrill whatever. It was the next day, and he was coming down-stairs with an armful of books and papers, balancing them precariously along with his hat.

"Well met," he called. "I'm rushing for an appointment. I'm wondering if you'll go walking at four?"

"That will be very nice," she said; and he hurried on with a quick little nod.

It was not till he had quite passed that she blushed and quaked. But at least she knew that the first plunge was over. She could say to herself after this that she had already seen him—since. She went on, ostensibly about the business that was keeping her in college; but, in reality, any capabilities she had for work were quenched from the moment she knew of her love. She walked on, not thinking of her books, but of the strangeness of it all. Such a big world, and yet the only persons in it who mattered to her were those two little creatures—himself and herself.

He met her that afternoon just as she was leaving a class-room. She was glad of the shadowy hall and of the presence of other people. It seemed to make more simple the adjustment to what she felt was an anomalous situation; she did not know that it was one of the commonest in human experience. Most of the suffering and some of the joy in this world come from inequality in the emotions of two people.

Presently—such is the force of world-old instinct—she was talking to him much as she always did. An acute observer might have thought that her unconsciousness

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was a trifle studied, and that her gaze swept him almost too casually when their eyes met. To him her manner seemed the same as usual. But, indeed, he was not thinking very much about her. After some painstaking weeks of research he had at last become sure that it was not Greene at all who had written Greene's *Groatsworth of Wit*, but some one of quite a different name, and about whose life there were no records whatever. He retailed his proofs to her one by one, the internal evidence, the external evidence, and the evidence partly internal and partly external.

She listened absorbedly. Charters would have asked the world at large what difference it made whether Greene wrote that vivid autobiographical sermon or not; all that was necessary was for the young men of the twentieth century to read it, learn by it if they would, and at least reflect on how little the ways of man had changed in over three centuries. Charters would have marveled at a grown man spending four months or so in sifting down a few facts that resolved themselves at last into something that looked like a probability. Used as he was to the rough-and-ready half-truths and surface appearance of every-day life, Charters was unable to understand, as the academic mind does, how rare it is to come upon real facts, and how precious are the processes of finding them. He was not sufficiently deferential to the training which just such work as Gregory's can give.

But to Janet it was all more wonderful than ever, because she was seeing it through the medium of Gregory. He seemed to her to have done a very important piece of work, and she followed his reasoning with glowing eyes. It was not her mind that was listening, but her heart. As he spoke she was pulsingly aware of him—of his gestures; of the fixity of his steel-blue eyes as he looked at her, not seeing her at all, but just his own ideas; of his height; of the way the sunshine glinted across his cheek. She longed to make him aware of her, was eager for the

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hour to come when he should be talking, not of his work, but of her and of them both.

Some little thrill from the electrical charge of her vitality surging toward him must have touched Gregory, for he became aware in her of what he considered an especially pleasing, sympathetic quality.

"It's tremendously good of you to listen to me so patiently," he said.

"But it's such fine work," she told him, wishing she dared say that she cared about it, not because it was good, but because it was his.

"It's only a little milestone toward what I want to do," he said; and presently was embarked upon the story of his hopes and plans.

Janet wondered, as many a girl has in the like circumstances, whether there was anything especially significant, especially confidential in this talk. Had he, she questioned with a jealous pang, spoken just so to some other girl? And, like many another in such case, she felt that her ability to judge just how much his words were worth emotionally to her was hampered by the fact that she cared for him.

They were walking in the park; and, as Gregory had exhausted his impulse to talk about himself, he proposed that they enter the conservatory and look at the display of spring flowers. Janet passed among the glorious bursts of color a little droopingly. She did not know how well she looked above the flowers. Gregory liked to pass from the fragility of their bloom to the wholesome color of her firm cheeks. There was no flower there that had a purer tint than the amber of her eyes, and he was pleased with the wistful line of her red mouth and the decided little curls of her black hair.

They had reached the corner where the hyacinths stormed the senses with their heavy, relaxing odor when a man entered the conservatory by a door just opposite them. At first Janet did not recognize him, for her mind

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held only Gregory. Idly she thought of him just as she had when she first saw him: "Queer blue eyes in a dark face." But when he came forward with a friendly smile she knew who he was.

"How strange to see you in Chicago, Mr. Wilson!" she exclaimed.

When she had introduced the two men Wilson said:

"It feels much stranger to be in Wisconsin than it does to be here, Miss Bellamy. There was a time when I frequented these places much as you do now."

The conscious fatherliness of his tone was belied by his whimsical smile. Janet suddenly realized that it was absurd of her to have thought of Richard Wilson as old; he must be barely thirty, and that to one-and-twenty is quite a possible age. She smiled to think how old he had seemed when he had been teaching her Greek and Latin. She had met him occasionally during her summer vacation in Wisconsin, but had always kept toward him the pupil attitude. Now, in her pleasure at seeing some one from home, she found herself regarding him with the same friendliness she felt for Charters.

"I came to Chicago armed with your address," he said. "I am here to stay."

"Father wondered if you would not some day leave our town," Janet said.

Sallie Keyes had told her that Wilson was waiting only till he had sufficient money saved to venture the plunge into Chicago. Through Sallie Janet had learned something of Wilson's struggles, of his hatred of the little Wisconsin town, of his longing to come to Chicago, where, if he were beaten, at least he would be beaten by better men than himself. It must have been hard for him to wait, she thought, touched with a warm sympathy, for she knew herself what it was to wait.

"Did Sallie send me any message?" she asked, smiling. "The wretch hasn't written to me since I came back after Christmas."

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Wilson's mouth drew into a reminiscent smile. He was seeing Sallie as she had told him good-by—her little, irregular face, saucy smile, and the nodding bows in her brown hair. "Don't you come back if you don't he'p yourse'f to all the money in Chicago," she had said.

"She sent her love," Wilson replied, "and she would have written, but old Jeremy Keyes has been ill, and that has depressed her a good deal."

"I'll write to her," Janet promised.

Wilson took his leave and passed on among the masses of foliage and flowers, a distinguished figure at whom the other women in the conservatory looked twice.

"Quite a stunning person," remarked Gregory.

"I suppose he is," Janet said. "I seem to be looking at him for the first time."

As they passed into the park she told him who Wilson was.

"It's a good thing," Gregory said, "that poor and brilliant young men usually go out into the world prepared to fight. Just think what young doctors and young lawyers have to go through before they get a foothold."

"You people who go in for the academic life are safer," she said.

"I should think we were. Safe is just the word. We never get the great prizes as a few doctors and lawyers do; rarely are sure of more than a fair living; we have to give up the thought of luxuries. But any man of average scholarship does have this certainty of a decent living and of peace and leisure in which to do the research work which is so much more to him than the teaching for which he is employed."

"I don't know any one safer, unless it is clergymen," Janet said.

"They are the safest of all. Any stick of a man can get a berth as preacher. The sanctity of his calling seems to prevent his congregation from finding out what driftwood he is."

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"Every one ought to be born with a few thousands a year," proposed Janet.

"It would be more convenient. But most of us are born with the necessity of our way to make. By the way, your friend evidently does not mean to travel alone."

"Travel alone?" questioned Janet.

"You and he spoke of this young lady, Sallie, in such a way—"

"Oh, I don't know," Janet said, hastily. "They are friends, and people have a way of falling in love with Sallie."

"With the chances against a man in Chicago," mused Gregory, "he'd be wiser to travel alone."

Janet's heart sank. She was almost afraid to speak for fear she should be seeming to plead her own cause.

"I suppose it would be wiser," she said, slowly, "to get a safe financial standing and then to fall in love."

"You say that half ironically," remarked Gregory; "all the same, it is the sensible thing to do. I have often thought that a man who expects to be a professor ought not only to defer marriage, but ought to put it out of his life entirely."

"I suppose family life does interfere with a man's work," Janet managed to say.

"Precisely; a man who chooses the field of research has taken a country that is likely to prove inhospitable to the human emotions. If he is to give real contributions to human knowledge he must not only be prepared to make sacrifices, but also to exact them of his wife and children. For the sake of the world at large it seems better that a few professional men, especially those in academic life, should remain unhampered by wives."

Janet wondered if this could be the same man who only a few nights before had read poetry to her with so much feeling and appreciation. She was too direct and too much under the spell of her own obsession to know that a certain type of man reads poetry with the voice of his

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mind, while he seems to be reading it with the voice of his heart.

"Yes," finished Gregory, musingly, "it is wiser for a professor to travel alone."

He did not add what was in the back of his mind, "Or to marry a wife who has money."

It did not occur to him that a man of more perfect tact would not have expressed such views to a girl. Gregory had the quality, characteristic of humorless people, of not seeing quite where a discussion might lead him, of not seeing the embarrassing personal application that could be put upon his words. He merely looked to Janet to appreciate the good sense of his view. Indeed, he felt a little virtuous over this lofty ideal of self-sacrifice.

"It's very hard to generalize about such a matter," said Janet, rather tonelessly; "such things work themselves out."

"You're tired," he said; "I've been walking you too hard and too long."

She might have noticed that he spoke with the colloquialism and gruffness of the farmer's boy that he had been. But she was not thinking of what he was saying.

"I *am* tired," she replied, mendaciously. "This spring weather makes one's muscles feel like wet tissue-paper."

Janet was not used to suffering nor to waiting. It seemed intolerable that she must let chance, accident, time make or mar her life, while she sat passive for the future to bring forth what it would. She felt that some time Gregory must love her; it was impossible to face the idea that he might not; it took all her resolution to face the necessity of waiting until love told him that his theories about a professional man's marriage did not matter; that nothing mattered except Janet. Meantime, she was more unhappy than she had dreamed that it was possible for any one to be. She would look at other girls as she walked across the campus, and wonder if perhaps suspense were dragging at their hearts. She thought of

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Charters with a keener understanding of what his love of her must mean. Her books lay idle, she could not translate pain into work. She stood helpless and outcast from the safe, serene ways of life, a shamed petitioner at the shrine of love.

IX

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ONE bit of perversity psychologically curious rose to the surface of Janet's consciousness during these weeks of suspense. She felt that she must prove to Gregory that Wilson would get on perfectly in the city. One day she mentioned to Grace that Wilson was in Chicago.

"I believe Harrison said he passed him on the street," Grace said.

"Do you ever play fairy godmother to attractive bachelors, Grace?" Janet added, a little wistfully. Unconsciously, she was giving Wilson's case some of the poignancy that lay in her own feelings.

"What woman approaching middle age hasn't done it, or tried to do it?" Grace said. "Are you particularly interested in the fate of Dick Wilson?"

"Yes—I don't know. I think he's nice."

"I need a serviceable bachelor just now," mused Grace, "and Dick Wilson could trim an opera box beautifully. It's really hard to count on good-looking men at one's dinners—good-looking men not bound to some one else's chariot wheels. I'll ask Harrison to put something in his way."

"It isn't as if he weren't worth it," Janet said.

"Something good," promised Grace, with increased interest, as she reflected that among the various devices by which she had sought to make life rich the creating of a man's career had not been one. Harrison Ryder owed her a good deal; he would consider that she had a

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right to ask many favors before the score between them was even.

A few days later Grace was unwittingly the means of furthering Janet's emotional fortunes. Gregory was calling on Janet to tell her that he had been promoted from a fellowship in the University to an assistantship. He was enjoying one of those moments of complete happiness which are occasionally vouchsafed to man when his quarry has just come under his grasp, when the last excitement at the chase and the first realization of full victory are coexisting, when his mind is nebulously harboring hopes and plans which have, nevertheless, not yet shown themselves as the hunger of fresh ambitions. It is a joyful height on which he pauses legitimately, secure in having reached the absolute, savoring that perfection of delight which is his just before the absolute turns into the relative and he begins to want something else.

Gregory was drawing in long, egoistic draughts of Janet's delighted sympathy, not knowing that it was given with pain as well as with joy, for poor Janet felt that she herself should have crowned all his work, and now she was nothing but an avid spectator of his happiness, which should have been his and hers. She was calling for the twentieth time on the stock of adjectives which expressed her sense that his achievement was at once magnificent and quite to be expected, when the telephone rang, and Mrs. Sessions announced that Mrs. Harrison Ryder wanted to speak to Miss Bellamy. Gregory perceptibly pricked up his ears at the name.

Janet went to the telephone, and the maid who was holding the wire at the other end gave place to Mrs. Ryder.

"You've not forgotten you're dining with me to-night?" asked Grace.

"Rather not, Grace; I'm looking forward to it very much."

"Could you possibly bring a man? Two of my bach-

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elors have failed me, and I'm worn to a shadow telephoning for substitutes. I've managed to get Dick Wilson, but positively every one else I know pleads another engagement. Would you bring some one? Not young Charters; some one possible. I'll put him beside Ellen Guyon. I had to invite her."

"Let me think," said Janet.

She dropped the receiver and walked the three or four steps to the reception-room door.

"Could you possibly come with me to dine at my cousin's to-night?" she asked Gregory.

"Dine with—?" he questioned.

"Mrs. Harrison Ryder. She's waiting—"

"Yes; thanks very much."

Janet hurried back to the telephone.

"It's quite all right, Grace," she called; "I've got somebody."

"I hope he's nice." Grace's voice expressed a scruple, while her mind was busily rearranging her table so that this uncertain man could be put between Ellen Guyon and some woman who either would not mind being bored or who would be rather amused with the University species. There was, of course, the chance that this example of the University species might pass muster as one of themselves; it had been known to happen.

"Oh, very," Janet replied.

"You speak as if he were there with you. If he is, laugh, and I'll not ask you any more embarrassing questions."

Janet laughed, and Grace hung up the receiver.

"It's very good of you not to mind filling in at the last minute," Janet said to Gregory. "It's nice that you had no other engagement."

"I am glad of the chance of going to a dinner with you," he said; "and I have got another engagement, but it is only with a man, and I can put him off."

"Mrs. Ryder will send her car at something near seven," Janet said.

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Gregory rose, remarking:

"I didn't know you had any cousin in this country."

She smiled a little wanly as she gave him her hand at parting. She had spoken several times of "my cousin Grace," or "my North Side cousin." The fact that he could so easily forget what she said was a fresh reminder of her painful waiting. She did not know that once a lover has staked down the heart of his lady, no matter how devoted he really is, he is likely to forget a good deal that she says.

Gregory was in a very pleasant frame of mind when he handed Janet into the Ryders' limousine that evening. He could not see her very clearly as she leaned far back on the seat, and she talked very little. But with an agreeable sense of well-being he chatted to her about his plans and enjoyed her sympathetic monosyllables. He liked his background sense of ease and comfort, the luxurious car, the feeling that he was going to dine with fashionable people.

From the moment that he saw Janet standing in Grace Ryder's drawing-room Gregory felt, and knew that he felt, a fresh and different interest in her. He had never before seen her in evening dress. She was wearing an amber-satin gown Mrs. Ryder had given her, and it brought out all her striking points—her eyes, no darker than the gown; the blue-blackness of her waving hair, which was carried up high with an amber comb; and the firm whiteness of her shoulders and throat. She looked as if she belonged against her rich background and among the other beautifully dressed women, and Gregory appreciated this the more because he had a sense of himself as not belonging.

At dinner he was seated opposite her, and he found his eyes going again and again to her face. He was making a serious if masked effort to get on with the women between whom he sat. Ellen Guyon was simple enough. He was at ease with her because she was his student. He

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tried his other companion with some current plays and novels, and she tried him with the University; and Grace's lightly mocking eye said that Gregory would never be more than on the outskirts of the real interests of her set. Gregory was surprised to see how well Janet got on; she had not been invited merely to fill in. She had met enough of Grace Ryder's friends to be able to talk a little about people; she knew what was going on in politics; she touched on the recitals of a musician who had recently come from Vienna at the wrong season; on a wonderful polo pony that was going to be sold at auction in New York, and on a horse-show that was being arranged by the Albemarle Hunt Club. Janet frequently picked up talk from the dinner companion at her right and transferred it to the one at her left; but Gregory did not see this. He realized only that she was readier than he at assuming the technique of the leisure classes, and he saw that her enthusiasm and her beautiful voice pleased her two dinner companions.

Janet, for her part, was blind to the distinction of these companions, though she could have estimated them perfectly if her eyes had not been filled with Gregory. She ignored the impression of promise and power which the much more marked personality of Wilson conveyed. Only Gregory was lighted for her; such is the glamour of a longing love. She felt very tired as she and he drove southward; Janet was a poor actress, and it had been almost more than she could manage to endure the evening opposite Gregory and yet so far away. She was too sad and uncertain to realize that his tone toward her had assumed an increase of intimacy, even a faint flavor of proprietorship. So many times during the past weeks she had read something warm or personal in his words, only to be hurt later by some clear accent of indifference. And so, when he took her up-stairs and touched her hand at parting, she was surprised to hear him say:

"Good night, Janet."

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It is pathetic or amusing, according to one's point of view, to observe of what meager materials an anxious love will construct its hopes. Janet went to bed with whirling brain and wild, singing heart. It was early summer, and outside were countless human tragedies and comedies, taking their large or little way; Janet was not even remotely aware of them. She could have heard the far-off reverberation of trains, the lonely cry of whistles, the sad sound of bells, the muffled fall of feet. But she heard only Gregory's voice; she saw only his eyes looking at her with what surely was something like tenderness.

Without comment they became "Janet" and "Mark" to each other, and the use of their Christian names established a fresh advance in their intimacy. Their confidential talk about themselves was another advance. Doubtless, Janet presumed on the relationship she was looking forward to.

"Mark," she said once, "do you think I am at all pretty?"

She spoke as impersonally as she could, and she sustained calmly his long, critical look.

"If you are beautiful," he said, slowly, "you are beautiful by a devious route."

He was so pleased by the remark, and so gratified by her appreciation of it, that her good looks were at once enhanced for him. Any girl in love with a man of literary tendencies runs a good many risks from his play of imagination. Janet, her eyes, her voice, her smile, formed a never-failing claque of applause for Gregory's way of putting things.

"Stevenson couldn't have said it more wonderfully," she cried, and the sincerity of her compliment made him blind to its amplexness. Gregory at once felt obliged to show himself superior to Stevenson, at least in her eyes, and there was little more personal talk on that day.

Janet could have told better than Gregory how they gradually slipped into that mystical region of intimacy

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that lies just outside the borders of love-land. And yet even she sometimes had to go back in her reckoning. Occasionally, on an evening walk, Gregory would show her a consideration and sweetness that were very moving; he would not talk of his work or of anything but matters that concerned them both. Again he would spend a whole afternoon discussing abstract topics, looking at her with steely, unseeing eyes. Such hours she found it hardest to bear. She did not care what was going on in his mind; she wanted to know what was going on in his heart.

Gregory was as unanalytic as most men. Whatever was going on in his heart was going on subconsciously. He was drifting during these early summer days, content in his professional good fortune, content in his friendship with this attractive girl. He could scarcely have told when he first began to love her. There was a night when, as they were walking, she looked up at the moon, and he felt that he would like to kiss her. There was another night when they sat by the lake burrowing in the sand, letting their hands tunnel toward each other and then clasp; her warm touch thrilled him. At yet another hour they were walking when other people were dining, and they ran a race; he beat her in spite of a generous handicap, and as she ran toward him, her face aglow with mock chagrin, he wanted to make his arms the goal for that pulsing body.

Yet the night he spoke he scarcely knew that he meant to, although as soon as the words were said it seemed to him that they had been trembling on his lips for a long time. The two had gone out to the end of the long pier and were sitting side by side in silence. To their left the water curved backward, its blackness meeting at last the long line of shore lamps twinkling one by one northward till they merged in that wide, dimmed core of light which was the city. To their right, over the black miles of space, shone the yellow, fierce glow that was the symbol of the steel works of South Chicago. Charters could never

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look at that vast sheet of color without seeing the reality it stood for—the great torrents of crimson and purple flame shooting up from the blast-furnaces; the glowing red pigs of steel handled by little, black atoms of men, the scarlet streams of molten metal which they must stop at risk of life and limb. Charters would have remembered that once a fortnight shifts of these men worked twenty-four hours on end, and then the hospital in the steel yards was even fuller than usual, and more men signed statements freeing the company from blame, thus receiving the chance to go back to work and again run the risk of being burned. But Janet and Gregory had never visited the steel yards; the beautiful symbol of yellow glow was enough for them, and if they had been told that it was like many symbols, neatly divorced from reality, they would have still cared about its beauty, for they were young, and they loved the arts, and life had so far been good to them both.

Janet was looking from the soft blackness defined by the lights to the still loveliness of the stars. For the moment she was feeling a dull peace. She had suffered so many weeks of despair and hope, of shame and defeat and longing, that for a little while her nerves had reacted and were at rest. She thought that if only life could be just like this, no worse than this, she could endure it to have things unchanged. This was the nearest poor Janet had ever come to resignation, to a recognition of the fact that perhaps life was not going to give her what she wanted.

Gregory merely thought she was rather quiet, and that for several weeks she had seemed not quite like herself—rather dimmed and nerveless; she was probably working too hard, as so many of these foolish girls in college did. He watched her as she looked up at the stars; her hair had escaped in part from its pins and seemed almost alive, inviting the caress of a hand; her eyes in the shadow were dark and mysterious; her lips drooped like a soft flower.

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As Gregory gazed at her his mind left a complacent journey it had been making along the route of his pleasant fortunes, and absorbed the impression of Janet. Her body beside him moved him—the tender curves, the rich vitality subdued for the moment indeed, and yet the same vitality that had stirred him like the delicate winding of a horn to such action as the academic mind is capable of—to winged thoughts, to shrewd phrases. How many good days they had had together! And then, chillingly, the thought came—what if there were no Janet in his life with whom to talk things over? What if there were just space in the stead of that splendid, wholesome body? And next he got his most real impression of the flame-like spirit of which that body was the sheath. In a flash he felt the generousities, the ardors, the sympathies, the appreciations for which she stood and which she had shown him; he felt Janet. And he thought of a poem he had been reading to his class that day. He murmured the last stanza:

“Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy nor love nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.”

She looked at him broodingly. She was really only dimly aware of his words, still in that quiescent mood of dull resignation to pain. But so inaccurate may be our interpretations where emotion is concerned that Gregory thought that the verses were as thrillingly alive to her as they were to him, that they spoke the same message to both. If he misread her momentary mood, he was right in trusting the instinct that told him he could be sure of her.

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"Janet—mine," he said, and he drew her brusquely to him.

She lay passive, and then she swayed wildly, for a moment making him think that he was mistaken, that Janet was not his. But it was not that; it was the throb of unbelieving joy that her heart gave, that her whole body uttered. This had been so long in coming, could it be that at last she was on the threshold of happiness?

"Won't you love me, too, Janet?" he whispered.

There was no sense of restraint left in Janet. She put her arms about his neck and said, chokingly:

"Oh, I do, I do!"

She wept, clinging to him, and he found her dependence and ardor very sweet. Dimly he felt reserves of delicacy and passion in her that promised a wealth of joy for their tender hours.

"Why do you cry, Janet darling?" he asked.

"Oh, say it again," she whispered.

"Say what?"

"You—know."

He laughed at her lovingly; he knew, indeed.

"Janet darling, sweetheart, I'll be very clumsy at thinking of love-words, because, you see, I've never said them yet to any girl."

A few weeks before Janet would have taken it for granted that the beloved had saved himself absolutely for her; but her period of waiting had been so full of fears that she was glad now of his words.

"I am the very first?" she said, joyfully.

"Yes; am I?"

"Of course," Janet said, in a quaint tone of conviction that made him laugh.

She laughed, too, for sheer happiness, as lovers do. If that indifferent old person, Nature, had any concern with her own works, she would surely give herself pause now and then to listen to the laughter of lovers. It is sweeter than the laughter even of children, perhaps because it is

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brifer, perhaps because it holds knowledge as well as joy. It would be a pretty exchange for mortals if Nature would reduce her full, long chorus of the world's weeping and give us more spontaneous laughter; if she behaved not like one of the fates or like a malicious sibyl, but more like a mother who had once been a lover herself and wanted to bequeath the best wealth of the spirit to her children.

The litany of lovers is almost as fixed as the litany of the church. It is some thousands of years older, and has the meretricious effect of seeming quite fresh to the lovers who say it for the first time. Even when one or both is repeating it for the second time with a different partner it is possible to use a kind of magic and go back to the seeming of pristine loving. Neither Janet nor Gregory had ever made the demands and responses before.

"How long have you loved me?" Janet asked, brokenly, happily.

The beautiful voice thrilled him—his voice, his Janet. He kissed her softly and then passionately for reply, his hot cheek pressed against her own, his heart beating fiercely against her arm. Strange pulses stirred in Janet; voices that she had heard but had never understood began to speak now with a meaning, still veiled, but decipherable. She had a breathless, glimmering revelation of intimacies, of a union which should be more than the union of spirit and mind.

"I've loved you forever," said Gregory, hoarsely.

It was unspeakably sweet to Janet to have her dreams coming true, but she had not yet taken a deep enough draught, perhaps because she had been athirst for so long, perhaps because women of her temperament have an elastic capacity for asking for more love.

"Tell me how much you love me," she begged.

"It's my turn," he said. "Tell me when you first began to love me."

She was very unwise; she told him. It is not good for

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even the most liberal-minded and modest of men to know that a woman was thinking of him before he began to think of her. A man has an inalienable wish to be the pursuer; he is the better pleased if his creature is fleeing before him, and at the least he likes it to be browsing unconsciously as he approaches. By the rules of the game, which have been made, as everything else in the world has been, to correspond to the nature and wishes of men, Janet should have said vaguely that it didn't matter, since she loved him now. But she retailed to him the whole process of that evening of fear and joy when she had seen him as the beloved.

"That was before you cared, wasn't it?" she asked.

"It was before I knew I cared," he replied, cautiously, wanting not to hurt her feelings.

Janet did not understand the male point of view; she merely wished Gregory to sympathize with her for all she had suffered.

"Why do you think it was, Mark," she asked, "that I knew first?"

"I don't know," he replied; "perhaps girls are quicker."

"Oh, you didn't say, 'I don't know, *darling*,'" she pointed out, "so perhaps you wish you *had* been first; do you?"

He said, with many tender words, that it did not signify who had first begun the loving. She replied with a full account of all she had endured in waiting for his love.

"My poor darling," he said, drawing her close to him, and knowing a resurgence of passion as he felt her wild heart beating—"my poor, little Janet, to think what has been going on in you while I was quite calmly talking to you of my work."

"Our work," she corrected.

"Our work. Oh, Janet, to think of our working together!"

Janet secretly felt that work must come after loving, and that she could never get enough of loving and turn

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to work. She did not yet believe that the time always comes when the most devoted man will turn, without regret and even with relief, from the world of love and a woman to the world of men and work.

"Some day," he said, dreamily, "we'll talk of our plans. Just now I want to live."

Janet wanted to live, but she wanted to talk, too.

"Just think of always being together, Mark," she said. "Can you realize it?"

"No, I can't," he said. "I'm not used to being together with any one."

"Not even with me?" she asked.

"With you?"

"Didn't you think of me before I came?"

"Only vaguely," he said. "A man has to think of his living and of getting on in the world. Sometimes when he dines with a married couple, and hears them calling each other 'dear,' and perhaps plays with the children and gets the impression of settled, happy domesticity, he goes away to smoke and dream of his own home. But he is content to leave it to the future. Is it so with a girl, dearest?"

"I don't know how it is with other girls," Janet said. "I only know that I have loved you and waited for you all my life."

She told him brokenly, ardently, of her love for him, of her dreams. He was touched and shaken at her innocence, her ungarnered passion; his sense of possession was flattered that all this purity, all this wealth, should have been so jealously hoarded for him.

"And I am the first who kissed you?"

"Except my father."

It was a purer record than he could boast, with, at the best, the memory of rough, country frolics, of hoidenish kisses snatched and returned. He looked at her pure, tender face with a silent vow to be worthy of so much love.

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"Janet, how you care!" he breathed.

"Oh, I do! I do!" she said, proudly. "I want to care more and more, and give more and more till the day comes when we are both beyond giving."

Perhaps Nature knows what she is about when she so mercilessly engineers that palpitating process which her subjects call love. Perhaps the intensity should be brief, so that if it be not real, it shall be the less blighting, the less shameful in retrospect, shall leave a lighter mark for the new love to erase. And if it prove real, then the intensity burns into the soul and flowers there into virtues that never quite die. Many a wife and husband, patient under reverses, gentle under irritations, are so, not at all because habit and the requirements of the world have bound them; what inspires them is the loyalty and tenderness kindled in their characters long ago by the first fires of their love.

They sat together long on the pier, careless of time, intensely conscious of each other. They savored each moment, reluctant to let it slip away.

"Oh, I wonder if there can ever be for us another night like this?" Janet cried.

"I wonder?" he echoed.

"We say that, but we think there must be," she said. "Say that there must be!"

"I was thinking just that," he replied.

Then they exclaimed at the way their minds were attuned, quite forgetting the preceding weeks when they had gone in spirit such different ways, each misinterpreting what the other was feeling or unable to divine it. They prophesied for themselves eternal harmony of feeling, as lovers have since time began.

"I'm glad I have a good mind for your sake," said Janet, raising her ardent eyes to his.

"I'm glad you have a good body," he said, under his breath, drawing her once more to him in one of the embraces which took her senses swimmingly and made her

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wonder why it could not be given us to choose for ourselves the particular moment we should wish to last forever. He held her harshly, wildly to him for a long moment, hurting her face, crushing her hands, but she did not wish to be released. Then he kissed her softly, knowing that tender aftermath of passion by which the hour of prose is connected with the lyric flight.

"I suppose," he said, reluctantly, "that I ought to let you go. I am afraid to look at my watch."

"Then don't," she said, happily; "it's so lovely, all this. How can we leave it, and each other?"

With an adorable gesture she stretched out her arms to the sky. She looked at the dim, beautiful shape of lights which was the sleeping city, and at the flaming glow of the steel-mills under which the black atoms suddenly worked; she looked at the soft, black water and the quiet stars, and she loved it all.

"I am so happy I could weep," she said.

He rose, lifted her to her feet, and held her close.

"The top of your head comes just to my mouth," he said, with the air of one making a delightful and important discovery.

"Do you think," she asked, as, arms interlaced, they began to walk along the pier—"do you think that any two people ever loved as much as we do?"

It is the oldest phrase in the lovers' litany. It is what Paola and Francesca said each to each, and what the lightest of summer lovers may say. That person, Nature, who is as canny as she is indifferent, has a whole mint of counterfeit coin which some lovers use, unable to tell it from the true, or else not caring. Perhaps in this world where shams monopolize such a large share of the lime-light, and where truth is generally found inconspicuously lurking up-stage, it is of no special advantage to be a connoisseur in the coin of love.

"Dear Janet, when I think of the people I've known who have been in love it doesn't seem to me that other

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people can care as we do," he said, sincerely; and the world-old answer seemed to her delightfully unique.

They left the pier and turned upon the stone walk which they had trodden so many times, but never with such glorified feet.

"Why," gasped Janet, as they paused under a light, "you look just the same!"

She stared at him, bewildered; then she gave a little sighing laugh.

"It's such a miracle," she said, "that it seemed to me as if our faces must have changed, too."

He took her by the shoulders and set her squarely in front of him.

"Mine has; look at me hard; have you ever seen me look like this?"

She never had, indeed; gone was the steely gleam from his blue eyes; the quirking smile was all love; his whole face spoke of devotion for her. Janet had no words; she held out her arms with a worshipping gesture of giving and receiving.

They walked to her lodging-place, their silence made more perfect by occasional broken, happy phrases of endearment. Mrs. Sessions opened the door to them with a shocked, hard look.

"It is one o'clock, Miss Bellamy," she said, menacingly. Then she saw their joyous, innocent faces, and her grim look broke. "They'll never know a time like this again," she thought. Aloud she said, "Lock the door after you," and she retreated down the hall, to give them a chance for their farewells, her ample calico kimono covering more sympathy and understanding than most land-ladies have for the young.

Janet and Gregory clung together as if they had never embraced before and as if they feared they never might again.

"Oh, what if I shouldn't see you any more?" Janet cried. "Oh, what if you were to die in the night?"

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"I couldn't," he said, with conviction; "not when you love me this way."

Two more old sentences from the lovers' litany, born of that challenge which love makes the spirit cast at time and chance and fate, that sense of power which seems so resistless, that glorious egotism which love engenders; Nature would laugh at it if she were not so impersonal, or perhaps she would weep; so many lips that have said such words have had to confess defeat and are lying low enough now. Janet and Gregory were just two more in the ranks of the countless battalions which have trodden Nature's long march.

"Good night, my beloved, my beloved," crooned Janet, her voice like a bereaved bird's.

"Good night, my darling."

"Oh, I can't bear to let you go."

"Dearest," he breathed, "we sha'n't always have to say good night—this way."

The many, many lovers who have said just that! Not usually on the first night of love-making, but these two were living fast. How many a girl has thrilled with a strange, terrified wonder when her man of all the world has said just those words, so daring they sound to her, so freighted with a sweet and sacred, if passionate intimacy!

Such a wise, sly, specious old woman is Nature; no, not a woman, because she has nothing to do with a heart; just a sexless, careless, managing, plodding Force, destined never to fail, destined early or at long last to make all human beings acknowledge her authority; be they weak or strong, be their words for her of blessing or of banning, they have to bow to her will, if only at the end when they turn into dust of which she will still make use.

Janet thought nothing of Nature; she and Gregory she took to be working out their own destiny. And Janet thought nothing of the many lovers, sad or joyous, who that night were clay in Nature's hands. She did not

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think of Charters turning from a bit of successful lawing to reflect on the emptiness of winning cases in a world without Janet. She did not remember Ada Sargent, who was tossing on her pillows this summer night, filled with longings for a life of her own, bitterly telling herself that all the great Movements, all the Causes of Women and of The People were barren enough comfort to her. She could not see Grace Ryder slipping into the nursery to look at her children, and to ask herself why they were not enough. Least of all did she have a vision of her cousin Lilius, whose lips no man had ever touched, and whose dream of love was her great humiliation. The hinterland of Janet's mind was peopled with love and happiness, and in the foreground was Mark—Mark and his aims and lips and words. Over and over, trembling and breathlessly, she heard him say:

"We sha'n't always have to say good night—this way."

Happy, indeed, is the woman who is too happy to waste time in sleeping. It was Janet's most wonderful night, and it did not end till the dawn crept in gray and then pink at her windows. Even then she dreamed of Mark, while Mrs. Sessions got breakfast for a number of hungry students interested in their puny work; and the whole dull world whom Mark did not love, and who did not love Mark, took up the petty concerns of a new day, not knowing the wonder that had come to pass.

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MOST biographies of the soul, as we find them in memoirs, strike us as sparing or glossed over, or as too much tainted with the biographer's interpretation. Yet perhaps an autobiography of the soul would be just as unconvincing; if so, it would be because of its strangeness. There would be long, arid reaches where the world had seen fruitfulness; there would be a scrofulous decay where had seemed health; there would be a wealth of secret harvest under apparent barrenness. We might find we had been harboring a stranger or shutting out the friend for whom we had been long questing.

Janet's soul in these days might have bored the non-participating observer because of its full monotony of joy. Her happiness was constantly at high tide. There were no slack-water hours for her during this period; and if there were for Gregory, he did not speak of them. She could not discriminate among her joyful moments. There was the hour when she saw Gregory for the first time since his avowal. It was the next morning, and she met him by chance in the English library, whence he had come after a class, and where she had gone, apparently to read, but really to dream of him. She looked up at him, and the whole world might have read her face. Janet's love was no more to be concealed than a flaming torch.

"Oh, Janet," he had murmured, "if you had ever looked at me like that before I don't know what I shouldn't have said."

There was the day when she first shopped for their

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house—their house! That wonderful harbor whence they were some day going peacefully to observe the storm-tossed world! Gregory had said that when he was a little boy he had always wanted a smooth towel with a blue border. Janet bought half a dozen fine towels edged with blue, the color of his eyes. The jaded “sales-person” who sold them to her knew that here was a girl who had everything she wanted. Janet pitied the wearied woman, and hoped that she would some day find some one to love her. As she passed through the shops and the streets Janet would have mated all people into happy couples. She would have made love change the world into a radiant Utopia, being quite forgetful that there were other matters which counted in happiness, to which Charters and Ada could have directed her attention, such as more hopeful economic conditions and health. Perfect happiness can securely be coexistent with clear sight and logic, and Janet was perfectly happy.

Janet did all her living for Gregory. Everything that happened was significant because she could tell it to him. When she was away from him she thought of him almost constantly, referred things to him, dreamed of what it would be when she was with him again. She was absolutely prodigal and unwise; all she did and felt was most undisciplined, the worst kind of training for her future or for any future. That woman who suffers least in love is the one who has trained herself to give when her man asks, to be unrestrained in brief, vivid moments, but who has made for herself a breakwater behind which she can readily dam up her floods of love when they are not needed. That is, she has learned to love somewhat as a man loves; she has acquired a care for the interests which he has by nature; she has taught herself to feel for work, for ideas, for matters external to love and sex, and thereby she has won for herself many hours of peace; hours when her less fortunate sisters are grieving over men, or waiting for them to come back, or waiting for them to grow more

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tender. Janet belonged all to her Mark, and, therefore, she was defenseless.

It was strange how lightly she let go what might have been such a resource for her lean days; but she could not conceive of lean days. Her work she neglected, and she slipped out of the slight hold religion had upon her.

"We've never talked about religion, Mark, have we?" she said once. "There's so much to talk about."

"And forty years to do it in," he told her.

Janet branched off with a speculation as to which of them would die first, filled with shuddering pity for the one who would be left, deciding at last that it must be that they would die together. Then she came back to her topic of religion.

"I was confirmed, of course, and I went to church regularly at home to please Cousin Liliás. Here I generally sleep on Sunday morning, though if I am awake I go to service because I like the music. But yesterday I really believe was the first time I ever thought about religion, and I didn't think about it long. I went to hear that clergyman from over the seas, because he was Scotch, and on your account I love everything Scotch."

Again there was an interval of marveling over the vicarious power of love, and then Janet went on:

"He elected to precede his lecture by a prayer, and we all stood up. Mark, when I looked at those hundreds of people, all on their feet, with their heads bowed before Some One I couldn't see, while the clergyman reverently asked for blessings from this Some One Whose blessings, as far as I know them, are certainly shed through secondary causes and Who, despite the Bible, does let the righteous be forsaken and his seed beg bread—why, then, I knew it was all just a strange convention. At least, in that moment, I knew that religion means nothing to me. I don't need it, anyway, since I have you. I don't believe in any God; I believe in my Mark."

Gregory's own religious beliefs were vague and quite

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inoperative in his life. He told her that poetry was his religion. And, indeed, his love for poetry and his power of reading it were one of his reasons for considering himself capable of the deepest feeling.

They enjoyed talking to each other of their past lives—that arid period before they had met. Janet told him all about her father and Cousin Lilius, and the farm that was managed like a “gentleman’s place,” and he was not displeased to find that, while she meant her father and cousin to live as they always had, she was going to keep the allowance she was using. He told her of his stern, Lowland, country father who never kissed his children, and of his affectionate Highland Scotch mother. Neither of them thought of how hard it must have been for her to be happy with Gregory’s father. Janet and he considered that their love had endowed them with much sympathy and understanding; so it had for each other, and for a great deal that stood immediately in their way; but, like all lovers, they had very imperfect and partial sight.

No lover could have been more satisfactory than Gregory was. His love came at a time when it seemed to complete his life. The proposal to Janet was a consequence of his certainty of an assured professional career. He was young, and the young are likely to be looking for a mate at any time; the restraining factor is usually lack of adequate support. Neither Janet nor Mark read their experiences in any such fashion.

She had meant to tell no one of her engagement. Gregory had said that it might look the least bit absurd to people that he had got himself engaged just as soon as he was sure of a position; further than that, he did not care to have the world know about his private affairs. Since they were not going to be married for more than a year, he saw no use of public announcement. Janet wanted to do whatever pleased him. If she had been more worldly she would have remembered that men deeply in love want to let the world know of their good fortune.

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Yet she told Grace and Ada. She was dining with them on a night of reluctant freedom, when Gregory had gone to dine with the Guyons. It was Ada who brought out Janet's confession.

"When a girl," she said to Grace, teasingly across Janet's head—"when a girl looks at times dreamy, and then at times like a dart of fire, what does it mean, Grace?"

"Perhaps it means," said Grace, "that she is taking a journey in the Land of Heart's Desire."

"Not a journey," thought Janet; "she has gone to live there."

"Moreover," continued Ada, "when she can never come to see her friends because she always has an engagement, what does that portend, Grace?"

"Not men, but a man," replied Grace.

Janet, who had been listening, waiting, half-embarrassed, felt suddenly how sweet it would be to have a little feminine sympathy. She could never grow tired of telling Mark how wonderful he was and how wonderful love was; but it would be sweet to tell the same story to a different audience.

"It's a very great secret," she began.

They forbore to tease her because her eyes wore such a gentle, awed expression.

"I—yes it is," she stammered. "It's Mark Gregory."

For a moment neither of the women remembered him.

"Oh yes," said Grace, at last, "the man who came to my house with you."

Janet was surprised at the casualness of her tone; it was strange to think that her Mark could be to some one merely "the man who dined here once."

Neither Grace nor Ada had been at all impressed by Gregory. He had seemed to them merely a presentable man filling a vacancy at the table. They had to go back gropingly to place him as the man Janet was thinking of marrying. Yet, despite this illumination upon him, neither of them saw him in retrospect as in any way

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remarkable. He was a nice enough person whom some nice girl would marry, to be sure, but why their Janet?

"Janet, you're quite too young to be thinking of marriage," said Ada, harking back to the worshipping look in the girl's eyes. "A love affair, if you like, but women don't marry now at twenty-one."

"I'll be twenty-two when—when it happens," Janet said, shyly; and they saw that she thought the day was far enough off.

"I suppose you would naturally marry some one in the University circle," reflected Grace.

She had not made any plans of her own for Janet, but she had vaguely hoped that the girl's marriage might bring them more in contact with each other. And she had not looked for an engagement just yet. Feeling that she and Ada had not shown very much enthusiasm about Gregory, she asked Janet to tell them more about him. Janet launched forth on the full tide of her theme. If ever an edition got itself fully annotated, explained, and illumined, it was that relatively small human volume, Mark Gregory. Janet forgot her listeners and talked as if to himself. She sounded all her keys, laid bare all her ranges. She glowed over Gregory, she crooned over him; she was girl and child, a saint, a siren, and a poor little fool. When she at last apologized, trying to laugh, for her enthusiasm, both women kissed her and said they could listen to her for a long time, and wished her devoutly that happiness she was so very sure of.

After she had gone home, Grace said, pityingly:

"Poor child, she was like a poem, and as life goes, this lyric happiness will be about as brief. But a woman would feel robbed not to have had it."

"The poor little glorious idiot," mourned Ada. "No man is worth what she feels, but this Gregory less than some. I can't say that I paid much attention to him when I met him here; but I did get an impression of his limp unhelpfulness, humanly speaking. I felt as if I were

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in a room with an opaque window which could neither give nor receive light."

Grace was used to her secretary's figures of speech.

"All you mean," she said, "is that he isn't by way of being interested in anything you would call vital."

"It's more than that," said Ada. "Gregory is not what I call a real person. Some day she'll find him out."

"You would spell tragedy for her in any case, just because she is a woman," Grace said.

"Not quite that; I think every woman is predestined to be hurt by some man, but some hurts are helps to a real development, and some are not. Poor Janet needs a lot of trouncing by life; and necessarily, with her temperament, her lover would be the instrument. I distrust Gregory as an instrument. If she had to pick out a man so early, I wish she had taken young Charters. He's a good sort."

Grace made a little grimace which signified that if Janet married Charters she would be limiting her future socially, with the implication that if a woman must be unhappy, at least it was better to be unhappy on the height of a recognized social plane. Ada smiled teasingly at her.

"What a way we human beings have of speaking our own dialect," she said. "To you Charters is a rough-and-tumble fellow; really, life with him would make Janet fit to live in the world; she isn't now. He would teach her how to think of something besides herself and her love and her books. I feel timorous over Janet's future, but I can't do anything for her."

"Dick Wilson would be rather a nice man to marry," mused Grace. "Did I tell you that Harrison has made him his secretary?"

"Really?" said Ada, in a considering tone.

"Yes, my dear; I did ask him," Grace said, mockingly.

"Dick seems to me to have too much warmth for Harrison's bunch," Ada said.

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"Do you know, I don't think he was too anxious to accept, really," Grace said. "I don't know why in the least. But Harrison offered him a good deal, and I rather fancy from what Harrison said that his father has been making an appeal to him for money—the poor old creature; he'd waste it on the Board of Trade."

"Coming back to Janet," said Ada, "it strikes me as a one-sided arrangement that she can only get on, or fail to get on through love. When I get by St. Peter's gate, or whoever it is looks over your credentials, I'll have a lot of critical questions to ask which will imply that I could give a long list of people who could manage this world much better than it has been managed so far."

Janet would have been astounded to learn that any one pitied her. The only time she thought she needed pity was when she had to part from Mark. She had intended to go home in June, as she always did, but, since Gregory was staying to teach for part of the remaining quarter, she found it impossible to leave him. They arranged that they would both go away from Chicago toward the end of July, and do what they could with the barren weeks till they should meet again in October. And Janet couldn't really believe in these barren weeks. It seemed that she and Mark must always be passing just such idyllic days as those of June. Their parting was woe-ful; the day came when she looked back with wonder at the tragedy she made of it. Not that she minimized the wrench it was, but that she was amazed at her lack of appreciation of the relativity of all matters. But it is part of Nature's shrewd plan to take away from lovers the sense of relativity and to make them see the canvas of life with everybody upon it but themselves very much foreshortened. These two clung to each other as if the two months' parting meant eternal parting, and they marked the hour with old, old vows that lovers have been making since grass has been growing and water running.

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Wisconsin became to Janet merely a place in which one thought of Mark. She peopled the old house with him; there was not a room she passed through, not a chair she sat in, that did not become associated with him; from the excess of love she was able to put more warmth into her wonted affection for her father and her cousin Lilius. Toward the latter, indeed, she displayed a sympathetic tenderness, for by her own love she was able to read the older woman's scrupulously guarded secret. Cousin Lilius was embarrassed by the girl's attentions, and a little fearful that she must have begun to show her age, or else why should she call forth such unaccustomed consideration?

Janet did not confide her engagement to Sallie. The old friendship had not waned, but she considered that Sallie's attitude toward love was too light. She would regard the affair of Mark merely as a pleasant little interlude until it became a marriage, nor would she perhaps consider it final at that. Sallie liked to contemplate wide avenues of retreat in every situation in life. Sallie, in short, was not worthy of such a great confidence.

Sallie, serenely unconscious of her own unworthiness, discussed Richard Wilson as a matrimonial prospect in a way which seemed to Janet most cold-blooded and indecorous.

"I don't know that I could do better," she mused.

"Does he love you?" asked Janet, coldly, quite forgetting her own speculations before she had been sure Gregory loved her.

"Law, honey, I don't know. But it's time for me to get married, and since he really seems to be doing well—"

"I do think you're beginning at the wrong end, considering what he could give you in money," said Janet, crisply.

Sallie laughed.

"Why, honey-bug, whether you love or not, you have to have three meals a day and a roof. And besides, don't

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you reckon I'd like to live as well as some of these women Dick knows?"

"If I loved a man—"

"Oh, if you loved a man, Janet, you'd live in a rainbow with him till the dampness drove him out, and then you'd go runnin' after him with tears so he'd think it was still the rainbow chasin' him. I don't know any way of findin' out whether you can live with a man except by layin' yo' plans."

"Does Mr. Wilson know your point of view?" inquired Janet.

"Law, chile, how do you suppose a sensible girl talks to a man? Of co'se, he thinks I think any nice girl who loves a man could live with him on bread and cheese in a tent. Any girl with right good sense has to translate for a man into a style pleasin' to his sensibilities."

Ada Sargent would have approved of Sallie. She might not have found her interesting, but she would have admired her ability to take care of herself. Sallie belonged to the charming vampire species; the sort of women who never dream of walking shoulder to shoulder with their men, sharing the burdens and the heat of the day. They are carried in the arms of the stronger, spoiled and petted, so that they are warranted to feel the crumpled rose-leaf under the score of velvet coverings. When they do not end in the divorce court, they are adored by their husbands and children, and perhaps they have their value in that they furnish a means of discipline for other people. Ada, who had been hurt by men, felt a satisfaction in knowing that there were women who could not be hurt simply because they were too selfish and petty to care for any one but themselves.

"I'm goin' to yo' college next fall," said Sallie. "As a special student, so I can be near Dick. I ain't goin' to work very hard, but I'm mighty tired of livin' up here with Uncle Je'emy."

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"But—but, Sallie," said Janet, lowering her voice, "old Mr. Keyes is so ill; you couldn't leave him."

"The doctor says he won't last a month; he'll certainly be dead by October," said Sallie, placidly. "I've got a room in one of the halls all engaged. If I cain't see any one next year that I like better than I do Dick, I'll try to ma'y him."

"I don't believe you mean more than half you say, you wretch," said Janet, affectionately.

"That's the effect I seem to produce, and perhaps it is just as well," Sallie said. "Maybe, honey, I am really goin' to Chicago for Dick's good. He's been talkin' and writin' a lot of nonsense about the laborin' classes and socialism. I don't know just what socialism is, but I know you cain't hold to it and get on, and I certainly do hate the laborin' classes. If I am with Dick I can keep him straight."

Janet reflected proudly that she would never dare to try to influence Gregory's plans or thinking, and that if she did he was too big a person to permit the interference. He must be her guide, because he was so much greater than she was. She wrote this to him, delighting in her humility, glad to place the ruling of herself into his hands, wanting to give him everything, not aware that the longing to give often cloaks demands. They were beautiful letters that she sent him in these days, one every morning. She said all that words could say; she wrote of the little common happenings with a charm and humor that she was never again able to summon so well; she spoke in a myriad of ways of how she loved him. Yet the letters when written were only faint shadows, faint tracings of her real emotions. Nothing, she knew, would ever tell him but her lips, her arm, and silence.

She had planned many times how and where they should meet. It should be in a little sandy sweep just north of the long pier, where there was a sunken log and plenty of friendly shadow. His train, she knew, got in

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at something after six. It would be well after seven before he could reach her. Many times she pictured herself sitting on the log, looking at the darkening sky; then she would hear his feet on the stone behind her, stumbling, perhaps, because he would be hurrying. She would turn, come toward him, and then—Janet's heart always fainted at the "then"—the joy would be almost too much.

He had written her that he would arrive on the evening either of the thirtieth of September or of the first of October. Sallie Keyes would have promised to meet him on the first, and would have arrived on the second. Janet arrived on the thirtieth. Her train was late, and it was almost seven o'clock before she reached the trysting-place. As she flashed in sight of it, breaking through the bushes of the park, she thought she saw Gregory. For a moment it was a vivid hallucination—her Mark, seated on the log waiting for her, skipping pebbles over the smooth water. Then the picture faded; she saw that the log was empty, that there was no one on the whole beach but herself.

She sat down to wait for Mark. He did not come; but she was not unhappy. To-morrow he would come, and then would begin a golden year to end in their marriage. To-morrow was the beginning of their new life, and this evening was the end of the old. She would spend it in loving Mark, in prayers to love to make her worthy of him, to give her the grace to live nobly and for his best good the rest of their lives together. It was a purifying, white night for Janet, one of her happiest, and perhaps it was as well for her that it happened on this night before Gregory came back to her.

The next evening she was waiting for him long before he could have come. When she heard his footsteps at last, she did not turn. She was trembling too violently to have the power to move. He came close to her and blindly she reached for his hand, drew his arm to her cheek, gave herself to his embrace. And at the feel of

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his arms she drew back with choking terror, crying, even before she saw the look on his face:

"Mark, Mark, what has happened?"

He looked down at her broodingly, his eyes steely, his mouth hard.

"So you know already? But I did not think the letters—"

"The letters told me nothing," she said, brokenly; "it was your arms. What is it? What have I done?"

That is the pathetic cry of the woman who loves too much—"What have I done?" She has done nothing; she has, only because she loved too much, failed to hold a man incapable of appreciating her.

He sat down beside her.

"Janet, I don't know how to say it," he began. "When I left you I felt that no two people could love better than we did. Over and over I said to myself, 'If this isn't real, nothing is real!' Because I could get intense over a poem I thought I was capable of a great love. I thought I had inherited my mother's heart, not my father's. Well, I left you, expecting to be miserable without you, and I wasn't miserable. After the first two or three days, when the memory of your kisses had grown a little dim, I found I didn't even miss you. I was interested in my work and in seeing again the people I used to know. I'd read your letters and be remorseful because I wasn't feeling as you were, and I'd write the kind of answer I knew you'd expect. Then I'd hardly think of you till I went to bed. Sometimes it would all come over me—how dear you were, and I'd feel as I used. Oftener I'd simply feel caged and crazy because I couldn't live up to love as you were doing."

Some creatures can be blighted at once by grief. In that moment a good deal of the freshness was seared out of Janet, never to come back. A little of her throbbing vitality ebbed away, and never was it again at such

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full tide as in those days when she believed that Gregory loved her. If Gregory in the half-darkness could have seen her face he might have felt sorrier for her; but he was occupied in feeling sorry for himself.

"It's a bitter ending," he moaned. "I thought I was capable of a big love."

She yearned over him; but she, too, was sorrier for herself than she was for him. For he had his work, and she had nothing but him.

"What—what will you do?" she whispered.

She remembered in the novels cases of women who renounced an unwilling lover that he might go lirting to the lady who really held his heart, with whom the reader was expected to sympathize. Janet had never thought very much of the failures; their grief was discreetly cloaked so as not to disturb the joyous atmosphere of the successful ones. She thought of these failures now with a grotesque sympathy. She knew what she should do; by all the conventions of the novels, and of life, she should offer him his freedom. But she could not. She could only repeat:

"What do you want to do?"

"Do? How do I know?" he said, broodingly.

She looked at him with a rush of sympathy. It must be hard to wish to love intensely and to fall short. She wanted to help him, but, though she did not know it, she wanted to help herself. Unconsciously she fought for her love. She told him tenderly that they would go on as best they could; that all love meant was that each one must love as much as he could; it was not necessary to compare, to measure. Perhaps it was a test for the soul to wish to be a great lover and to miss, to want to be loved greatly and to have to be content with loving. If each of them were sincere and pitiful and understanding, they could be happy. Her beautiful voice crooned on bravely, and as he listened, and as he felt her nearness, he was comforted. He said they surely still belonged to each

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other, and that they could make of life a fine thing yet. And Janet agreed, with a dull heart. That was the night that her dreams died, and if, in spite of her, they came back to counterfeit of life, she never again wholly trusted them.

XI

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NEVER had the campus seemed so crowded and inhospitable to Janet as she walked slowly across it, most miserable on this June afternoon which should have marked a triumph, since it was her graduation-day. Diploma in hand, she hurried away from those who would have congratulated her. No one who really mattered was with her. In the distance she could see Gregory walking, in his cap and gown, Ellen Guyon beside him. He had muttered perfunctory words of pleasure to Janet, adding that he must divest himself of his paraphernalia, but would be sure to call in the evening. In a very gay group Sallie Keyes chattered. Old Jeremy had died in time for her to enter the University for the spring quarter. She had warned Janet not to tell any one that she was bereaved, because she wanted to have a good time. She had had it, and it had taken her more or less out of Janet's path.

Grace and Ada were out of town, or they would have been with her, she knew. But she preferred to be alone as she walked over the ground that had once been her shore of happiness, but was an alien place to her now, since she had lost the sure road to Gregory's heart and had been for many months a sad wanderer, sick for that home.

Janet was too unused to suffering to know that it is not a unique heritage. She supposed that life had let off many more people than it had. She judged them to be like Sallie, only even more unimaginative and unsym-

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pathetic. If she had said to Sallie that things looked rather bad sometimes when one lay awake in the night, Sallie would not really have understood the meaning of the words, nor cared to. Janet considered her own understanding complete, but she did not realize that every night in the world there is a vast, silent company of suffering men and women keeping that vigil which each must keep alone. Their vision and hearing is different from that of happy people. In these hours of absolute loneliness the overtone of silence seems menacing, the more so when it is broken by the lonely cry of a locomotive whistle or the harsh rumble of a late-going vehicle. They feel life as a presence, horribly oppressive, which they have to endure for the sake of others who love them, but who mean little to them; or else they go on living because some persistent and illogical habit of bone and blood holds them, when the spirit has no real place of its own.

Janet had so much vitality that her despair was shot through by inalienable hope. It seemed unthinkable that Mark should not come to love her just as he had before. She was pondering, as she always did when she was alone, on Gregory and herself. So dreadful was her tenacity that it had never once occurred to her to take the one route to safety—give him up. She might, in the beginning, have said to him:

“I don’t want to be engaged to a man who does not love me enough. Of course, it hurts and will hurt for some time to come. But I have plenty of resources; I can fill my life with work and other people till the scar has gone. Meantime, I am quite willing to be friends.”

If she had taken that attitude and had shown a bright, detached interest in him she might have won back all of him there was to win. For Gregory was like the average man, attracted by women who gave the effect of hidden resources, of wide paths of retreat. He had the unreasonable but quite human attitude of wanting to receive a

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great love, but of being dissatisfied precisely because it offered itself as generous and unchanging.

She went slowly past a bench on which she and Gregory had often sat, mourning at the lower levels their love had reached. Instinct had warned her that on the new basis she must try to exact nothing. She winced as she thought of the times when, calm-faced, she accepted his perfunctory embraces, and of those other times when in spite of herself her arms went out to him, and her eyes showed her suffering. Then Gregory would look at her broodingly, unhappily, and she would know that she had lost ground with him, and her sick spirit would grope dizzily for some means to win again what she could not but believe was her own.

Her tears crowded out the sight of that bench of dear and bitter memories. She began to think of Mark's careless words of affection; a "dear" comforted her where she had once taken "beloved" as a matter of course. She reminded herself that there were times when Gregory seemed like his old-time self. She knew well enough why; usually they had been talking about his work, and she had been making him see how wonderful he was, and how much surer of advancement in his profession than any of the other young men she knew. In the old days she would have said ardently:

"I love you so much that life will give you all the worldly gaude there are!"

Now she always spoke in a tone as impersonal as she could make it of his scholarly mind, and his excellent habits of work, and his convincing personality. Instinct made her thus crafty on occasions just as on other occasions it deserted her and left her helpless before Gregory—a woman clinging to a man who in spite of himself had the brutal impulse to thrust her away just because she clung.

Janet made the most of these times of the rekindling of emotion, warmed her spirit at the flames, refusing to

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see how dwindled and wan they had become in contrast to their former beacon-like soaring. And even when the temporary intimacy died and constraint came back, she would still search passionately for grounds of hope. When her Mark got used to the new basis, it would be easier; when he became absorbed in the winter's work it would be different; when it was spring again, his love would come back.

With a passionate gesture she clung to the back of the bench.

"Oh, Mark, your soul has gone away from me, walking a strange road, but it will come back!" she cried.

She had come to the basest of her fortifications—to the belief that once they were married she could win him back. It was that hope that was holding her fast to the fallacious theory with which so many women have tried to comfort themselves, the theory that each one of a couple must love as well as he can. And piteously she contradicted that by thinking that each ring of the door-bell must be his, by being afraid to go out for fear he would call in her absence, to say that his love had come pouring back, and all would be as it had been. She was always expecting the miracle, unable to accept the alien spirit in a familiar, beloved body.

She recalled how, only a few days before, she had met Gregory accidentally at the bench. Her wildly beating heart had made her tremble, but she had managed to smile and nod.

"Just looking for you," he had said, with that steely gaze she had come to dread. "I've had a message from the Guyons asking me to fill in a place at dinner. Do you mind if I go, dear? I could call on you to-morrow night."

"Of course, go," she had replied, bravely as she could.

"You could go to the Ryders," he had said, his look softening.

"Never mind me, dearest. I hope you'll have a beautiful time."

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She had been glad he did not offer to walk home with her. She had counted so much on that evening. She did not spend it with the Ryders, for she knew that Grace and Ada had read her grief. Ada mourned that Janet's heart could not be broken by some one worth while. Grace said that the sooner the heartbreak was over, the sooner hope and laughter and philosophy would come back. Poor Janet, waiting for the miracle, would have shuddered away from this philosophy.

With a long sigh Janet left the bench, and any one interested in superficial aspects might have been amused at her little smiles, quirks of the lips, and flashing glances. Poor Janet was practising what she would say to Gregory when he called that evening. She had come to the point when conversation had ceased to be spontaneous. When she was with Gregory she felt a terror lest she could not interest him, a fear that she could not think of anything more to say. And now she was going over some clever speeches which she would utter to him with leaden tongue and self-conscious gaze. In a way she had stolen the evening; she was almost packed to leave for home, but she was remaining for one more day to see if he would not suddenly need her, feel that he was going to miss her.

She entered the dreary apartment-house and mounted the stairs to the little room which she was so soon to leave forever. It had warm, amber walls on which were hung pictures she and Gregory had chosen—copies of "Life and Love," the profile fresco of Dante, one of Michael Angelo's cartoons, and Botticelli's "Spring." She had never looked at any of them without seeing and feeling Gregory. Her narrow bed was not merely a bed, but the temple of her tenderest dreams about him. In the Morris chair she had sat for an hour the night he had told her he loved her. The little willow rocker was where she sat when she meant to study, and too often that studying had merged into vague dreaming of the man she loved.

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At the little desk she had written him tender notes. She had never glanced into the mirror without his face feeling nearer to her than her own. But the room was meaningless now as she sat in the Morris chair, her eyes absently fixed on her diploma, which represented four years of work and which meant to her exactly nothing.

Presently Sallie Keyes ran in, a little remorseful that she had seen Janet only once or twice during the spring quarter, bubbling over with her plans for the summer, for she meant to stay in Chicago.

"I never had such a splendid time," she chattered. "Of co'se, it's been fun rather than business, but I've plenty of time for business later. I feel like seventeen."

By "business" Sallie meant, not studying, but getting married. She had a shrewd instinct as to whom she could safely express herself with freedom, and an imperturbable love of frankness.

"I suppose," said Janet, with a faint smile, "that you have little opportunity for what you call 'business' when you are fairly picketed with men."

"All the same," said Sallie, rocking complacently in the little willow chair, "I have done two or three bits of specializing, too. One of them was that Mr. Gregory that teaches English. He says he knows you."

Janet turned so that her face was in the shadow.

"Yes," she assented.

"We've had quite a case this last couple of months," Sallie said. "I reckon he has bought out a whole florist shop for me."

Janet shrank a little in her ample chair, a dull, heavy pulse beating in her temples. She had not been without jealous fears that Gregory might be attracted by some other girl. Yet she had not really dared think it possible, and she had been quite sure that he had mentioned to her whatever calls he had made on other people. They had been chiefly upon Ellen Guyon, whom she considered

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too old to be a rival. She sat stonily waiting for Sallie's next words.

"I never had had a professor fond of me before," Sallie went on, the little willow chair traveling toward Janet, "and it was fun, especially because some of the girls were so terribly impressed because he was calling on me. Queer, ain't it, how silly they get over a professor? But law! he can't begin to equal Dick Wilson."

Janet's heart was beating heavily, yet she was conscious of a rigid calm in all her muscles.

"Do you mean he wants to marry you?" she asked.

"Law, yes," said Sallie, easily. "He asked me a fortnight ago. He certainly is ardent; I reckon he's said all those nice, literary things before, though. He told me if I was beautiful, it was by a devious route. I kep' him waiting a week or so, like I always do. It's good for them, you know; it makes them real meek and humble for the next girl who comes along to really take them. Couple of days ago I told him we could on'y be friends."

Janet pushed her chair away from possible contact with the willow rocker. Her senses suddenly became very acute. She found herself following the reverberation of a wagon rolling past on the street below. She was aware of the breeze that was stirring the curtains of her window and the little curls on her forehead. Sallie, with her piquant face and drawling voice, was almost oppressively concrete.

"Sallie," Janet said, in a steady, hard tone, "you're a girl of long experience in the country of the heart. Were you ever jilted; and if so, what did you do?"

"Law, yes! Ev'y girl is jilted some time or other," Sallie said, easily, dragging the rocker to a point whence it could begin fresh travels. "Co'se, they never admit it, and sometimes it is a very informal kind of jiltin', like a man gettin' tired of you befo' he's got to the point of proposin', and just gradually easin' away from you. But I always do say that a girl with good sense won't let

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herself really care for a man till she's ma'ied him; and even then she ought to remember he can tire of her, and keep a little, hard place in her heart. So, you see, honey, if a girl doesn't care very hard she can see a jiltin' comin' and throw him down first. It's a great savin' to the feelin's, and it looks mighty well to the other girls."

Janet rose and began mechanically to open and close the drawers of the chiffonier.

"Whatever are you tryin' to do?" asked Sallie.

"Finish packing. I'm going home on the night train."

Sallie stopped rocking.

"But I thought you were goin' to be here two or three days longer?"

"I want to go home to Father and Cousin Liliias," Janet said, her voice quivering.

Sallie looked up at her sharply.

"Why, you po' child, I do believe you're homesick!" she cried, jumping to her feet. "I'll he'p you pack, and then you'll really get it all done. I'll run into the hall and telephone for an expressman."

Left alone, Janet walked to the mirror and looked at herself steadfastly. It was she to whom this had happened, and it was the end of things. Time enough later to discover if Gregory had meant her to learn through Sallie of his complete defection.

She and Sallie packed vigorously, and were just finished when the expressman came. Then Sallie kissed her good-by, and Janet closed the door with a great sigh of relief. Now she could be alone with her grief. She sat quite still till it was full twilight. She wanted to wait till Gregory came, to question him, perhaps to accuse. But her better instinct warned her to go away, not to see him again. She knew now that he must have despised her for her lack of pride; that did not matter so much as that she despised herself that she had been unable to give him the release he wanted. If there was anything of pride to be saved from the wreck, she wanted to carry it away with her.

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Mrs. Sessions knocked at her door and asked her if she did not want to have something to eat. Janet called out that she was going presently and would get something at the station. She rose, put on her hat and coat, and then wrote two words—"Good-by, Mark." She asked Mrs. Sessions to hand the note to Mr. Gregory, and then she closed the door of her room behind her. But it was characteristic of her dreadful tenacity that she opened it again. She could not bear to say good-by to the place that was so full of dreams of the man she loved. She knelt down by the bed and laid her cheek on the pillow. How many, many dreams she had woven about Gregory! All her life had been a dream about him, and now it was shattered, and there was nothing. She scarcely knew how long she knelt there until she heard his voice in the hall asking for her. Mrs. Sessions knocked at the door. Janet's arms went out; she wanted to go to Gregory, to tell him excuses for himself, to say that there was some sort of mistake. But she called all her strength to her aid and said in a choked voice to Mrs. Sessions:

"No, no; give him the note."

Even then she wanted to recall the words. She heard the front door close and she went into the hall.

"Good-by," she said to Mrs. Sessions.

"Good-by," said Mrs. Sessions, pityingly, "and God help the young."

Then Janet's tears fell. She drew her veil and hurried down the stairs. Half a block away she saw Gregory striding past a street-lamp. She reflected bitterly that he was probably enjoying some literary emotions. Self-blame, she was quite sure, would not be one of them. Gregory was always imperturbably certain that whatever he did and thought were quite right.

It was midnight when Janet walked up the deserted village street toward her home. It had never seemed to welcome her; it scarcely did now, but she hurried to it as wounded animals seek a hiding-place. Here no

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one need know; no one would be watching her. The front door was unlocked, and she made her way quietly to her own room, where she threw herself, undressed, upon the bed. Cousin Lilius found her there in the morning, staring at the white wall and talking earnestly in a low monotone, reasoning with Gregory, explaining to him why she could not help loving him, asking him to give himself time, to give them both time, telling him that life couldn't be so cruel as to take away from them the hope of love.

For several days Janet was mercifully lost in brain-fever, but her youth and vitality were too triumphant for there to be danger of her life. Slowly she came back to consciousness of pain and loss, and to a full knowledge that as her strength grew greater her suffering would increase. She had a curious, detached attitude toward her father and her cousin Lilius. She used to look at their gray heads against the wall of her room, noting indifferently her father's precise, still pose and her cousin's distressed fluttering. She would follow their movements and words, indifferent but keenly observant. She could not but see that her father was showing more affection for her than he had ever shown before, and even a shame-faced sympathy. She realized that she must have been talking in her delirium; but to that also she was indifferent. In a world full of pain one fact was about like another.

One day when she had been able to leave her bed for a fortnight, and was sitting with her father on the brick terrace, he said to her, abruptly:

"My dear, you talked a great deal when you were ill."

"I dare say," she murmured. "I don't seem to mind what I said, Father. If you want to know what it was all about—I had something inestimably precious, the only thing I ever wanted, and I've lost it; that's all. And I can't want anything else."

Bellamy was not a restless person, but he rose now and paced nervously back and forth behind her chair.

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"It's a devil of a world for women," he said. "It never occurred to me till you were ill. Will it surprise you very much, my dear, if I tell you that I am going to marry Liliast?"

Janet forgot to answer him. The first quiver of a new interest in life crept into her veins. In a flash of retrospect she realized the long years of quiet devotion, of shamefaced longing that had been the part of poor, starved, faded Cousin Liliast. Here had been suspense and hope and grief pacing beside her for years, and she had not felt them. If the longing of Cousin Liliast had been even the faintest shadow of her own longing, what the poor woman must have suffered! And she understood that it was only as her father had listened to the revelations of her own despair as she poured them out in delirium that he had known what pain withheld love can bring a woman.

"Oh—I'm very glad, Father," she said, at last. "I'm sure you'll both be happy—very."

"I think so," he said.

When Janet saw her cousin's gentle, happy face the first veil of her egoism fell from her.

"That's one good thing I am accountable for," she thought. "But for this loss to me, their happiness would not have come about. That is so much saved from the flames."

Yet in the long summer days, when sorrow waxed with her strength, their peace served only to throw back upon her in contrast her own despair. She did not like to sit with them in the evenings. Rather, she brooded apart, wondering how she could ever live through the long days, perhaps fifty years of days, without Gregory and without love, without the dream which was so much more precious to her than any of the thousand realities which she might have had and kept for the mere trouble of the winning.

Book II
THE CHRYSALIS

XII

FRESH BEGINNINGS

JANET stared with unnoting eyes out of the window as her train bore her toward Chicago. She was going to spend the winter with Grace Ryder, and she was wondering, in a moment of helpless reaction, why she had accepted her cousin's invitation. Peace would not be found in Chicago any more than it had in Wisconsin. Already Janet had reduced her demands upon life; from insisting on happiness she had come to ask only peace, and she was convinced that the one was as impossible as the other.

The summer had been hard. As her strength had come back she had felt it increasingly intolerable to live under the quiet happiness of her father and of Cousin Lilius. She was glad that life had given them so much at last, but they only served to prophesy to her that her own old age would be lonely. Yet drawing away from them threw her back upon her bare environment, and that was torturing, for it was the setting of the dreams which had led up to the tragedy of Gregory. He was wherever she had lived up to the time he had jilted her. She wanted to begin over in a house which should be as little as possible associated with him.

That old person Nature is notoriously careless about her waste; but if she could take cognizance of the degrees of it, she might consider that no waste is more painful than that of the humiliated spirit. And of all humiliations, surely the most dreadful is that which goes with an unwanted love. Janet's self-respect had so dwindled that she felt as if the lack of it must be freely written upon her

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face. She knew the quaking horror of soul and body which comes to the woman who has been abandoned. She felt that in taking himself away Gregory had taken everything from her. If he did not love her she could not be of any worth.

Yet she wanted to be of worth. Hope was hateful to her; but the struggle between her vitality and her wounded soul went on, with the victory unconsciously verging toward the side of vitality. Yet as her longing to get back her self-respect increased, so did her shame; her pride bent its head to think that she had been so slow to release Gregory. There was something pathetic or laughable, according to the point of view, in the naïve psychology which had impelled her to the house of Grace Ryder. Because she despised herself she wanted, though she still loved him, to despise Gregory. He had no place in the world of the rich and leisured, with the traditions of which Janet had been born. In those hours when she grasped wildly for some external means of buttressing her pride, she told herself that, as one who by right belonged, she could enter that world which received such as Gregory only as naturalized subjects. Naturalized subjects, Janet reflected, were like converts to the Roman Church; they offered the patronage and the sense of possession of the raw discoverer; the Church and the world could afford to be amused.

When Janet left the train and entered her cousin's motor-car she began to wonder, terrified, whether, after all, she had any place in Grace's world. She was a young, inconspicuous girl, with no position of her own, no money, no beauty, and the man she loved had turned his face away from her. She sat erect, as if she had no right to touch the luxurious cushions of the car. Perhaps, after all, she did not belong; perhaps Grace's friends would not find her good enough.

As the car turned into the Lake Shore Drive she looked in diffidence of spirit at the handsome, impervious houses

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which sat with their backs to the city and their faces to the wide lake. She saw only their faces. The day was to come when she was to look behind those prosperous, oblivious backs and see all that produced them. There was a business city of offices and money-marts whence, by way of an army of underlings who did not count, the gold flowed back and forth which made possible the Drive and all it stood for. There was a business city of shops, where silks and jewels, fruits and meats lay concretely on counters, handled by another army more meagerly paid than the first army, more narrowly destined to serve.

The comfortable, oblivious backs were a thick screen against any concern as to inadequate wages or thwarted desires for freedom and pleasure on the part of the two armies. There was a business city of factories, the submerged foundation of the offices and shops, and here was yet another army which knew of the Lake Shore Drive much as children know of the planet of Mars as something not quite to be believed in, and certainly never attainable. There was a sad, crawling, spawning city of what some people choose to call "the slums" in a tone as if the slums have brought it on themselves; a place where live the ignorant and inadequate, the clumsy and the unintelligent, the intelligent who are powerless to change their circumstances, the sick and the criminal—derelicts all, who drift perforce. Perhaps the well-fed backs masked the sense of an inability to change things; perhaps a cynical belief that any one in the industrial armies, or any one in the world of the derelicts, however full of class-consciousness, however hostile toward the irresponsibility of the wealthy, would, under the acid test of liberal fortune, alter his views.

Janet, gazing at the splendid houses and struggling with her self-depreciation, lost the deeper implications of those discreet backs. She was merely reflecting that the placid faces of the houses, looking out over the blue waters, was very characteristic of Grace's world.

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"Ours is the real distinction," they seemed to say. "You may have learned, little Janet, from your life in the University that any group of people must demand some sense of distinction in order to feed its self-respect. We can get what we want from the aristocrats of the intellect, just as surely as we can from the world of labor; ours is the power that comes from unlimited ability to buy. Other little worlds may question our pre-eminence; but we are, and always shall be, for nothing throughout the ages has really shaken our power. It is a misnomer to call us 'the leisure class'; no one works harder than the successful ones among us; but we are the free class; we can choose. We have underlings to save our time, so that we can accomplish an extraordinary amount and keep that appearance of leisure which we recognize as part of our charm. You, little Janet, partly on account of your university work, and partly through temperament, have an effect of concentration, of absorption, which makes you too tense; but possibly you are impressionable enough to lose that envelope of eagerness and acquire the unhurried ease and sureness which, despite all individual animation, is the hallmark of *us*. When our hearts are broken, little Janet, we refuse to believe in them."

The car stopped before the Ryder house. The chauffeur sprang down and helped Janet out, as one who had in charge a piece of flesh inestimably precious, and even sacred. Who should have known better than he the sanctifying power of gold, since it was continually giving to his manner an added finish of servility and thus enhancing his value? As Janet approached the magnificent oaken main door it opened. The man who obsequiously stood beside it to allow her to pass had the air of ushering her into a place far more desirable than what she was leaving.

"Out there," he might have said, "you have nothing but air and sunshine and the lake, and the faces of other

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people's houses—none of which cost as much as Harrison Ryder's house."

The man's views were supported by the reserved grandeur on the other side of the oaken door. Unconsciously Janet's sense of diffidence was soothed by this hired deference. A soft, quick flutter sounded on the stairway, and Grace came to her, arms outstretched.

"You dear! I'm so glad to see you! Will you forgive me for not going to meet you? It's the first Monday I've been at home, and hordes of people will be in to tea. I shouldn't have had time to get to the train and then dress. Come along, and let me show you your rooms."

As they went up-stairs, arms entwined, the tears came to Janet's eyes.

"You're so tremendously good to me," she murmured.

"Good to myself to have you," Grace said. "But no brooding, mind! You're going to be tremendously happy."

She threw open the door of a suite on the third floor. For all their richness, their sheen of amber and gold, the rooms were those of a young girl, suggestive of innocence and untouched treasure. The exquisite taste of Grace's idea and meaning moved Janet; that and the physical luxury of her surroundings were a help to her struggling desire for self-importance.

"Oh," she cried, throwing her arms impetuously about her cousin's neck, "surely there is something in me worth while if you can be so good to me as all this!"

"Don't give way, dear," Grace begged. "You're going to be quite a wonderful person some day. But—don't brood! There's a gown hanging in the closet that just got home for you this very day; I insisted on its being on time. You'll be charming, for its all in delicate yellows and faint browns."

Janet looked grateful and startled. "Oh, you *are* so good!" she repeated. "But—but do you think I ought to come down to-day?"

Grace reflected rather impatiently that a young, in-

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tense girl was prone to take a case of grief as if it were a case of smallpox.

"I'm depending on you to help at one of the tables," she said. "By the way, I wrote that little Miss Keyes, as you asked me to, and she replied with a most gushing note of acceptance. I hope she doesn't expect me to kiss her."

"It was awfully good of you," replied Janet. "She's always wanted to come to your house, and she is genuinely fond of me."

"I don't really mind swallowing her," Grace said, lightly. "I hear a car! I must fly."

Left alone, Janet looked about her rooms, taking fresh fortification from their loveliness. Grace's maid came to arrange her hair; and Janet, sitting before the dressing-table, watched herself in the mirror, at one moment liking the deferential ministrations, at another wondering what was wrong with that face and the soul behind it, that they could not hold a man. She looked very well when she was gowned, and her spirits rose. But when she was descending the stairs, and the sound of soft voices rose to her, she was conscious of a fainting disinclination to mingle with these people, of a fear that her eyes would publish to them her humiliation.

Ada Sargent met her at the door of the reception-room and greeted her affectionately. Not many people had yet come; but to her pleasure, Sallie and Wilson were among them. Ada's quizzical eyes expressed the conviction that Sallie doubtless meant to make up for coming early by staying late. Sallie fell upon Janet enthusiastically, but was quite willing to be led away presently by Ada to meet some one. Sallie's idea was that she had Janet, anyway; whomever else she might know was clear gain.

"Back presently," she said, with a confident little nod to Janet and Wilson. Her glance as it rested on Wilson showed the faintest hint of proprietorship, and Janet won-

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dered listlessly how far matters had progressed between those two during the summer. As his friends came up to speak to Wilson, Janet saw that they proclaimed, subtly but unmistakably, that he belonged to their world by the grace of long usage. She got a new impression of his charm as he stood with his fine, dark head outlined sharply against a blue tapestry hanging which intensified the blue of his eyes.

Ryder entered his wife's drawing-room. Janet saw his glance seeking for some one, and she supposed it to be Grace, or herself, his winter's guest. But Ryder's eyes lighted on Ada Sargent, and Janet felt a slight touch of discomfort as she saw him making his way to the corner where Ada stood talking to Sallie. Wilson said something to her, and they moved a pace or two away, standing where she commanded the door. There was in Wilson's manner an aid to her struggling pride. He acted as if he really took pleasure in being with her. She transferred her gratitude toward him to the room at large. There was something stimulating in the soft, lingering effect of the groups of people. The room seemed almost consciously a gracious background for them, their clothes, and their manners. Their pleasantly fused voices caressed her senses. Almost she felt as if she could really enjoy herself, when she suddenly received a strange chill of premonition. Her eyes fixed themselves on the door, and her heart seemed to stand still. Ellen Guyon entered, followed by Gregory. Grace would have found a mocking amusement in their manner. Ellen was preceding Gregory in rather an executive, managerial fashion, as if somewhat strenuously demanding right of way and full observation. Gregory's manner was one which he supposed pertained to the privileged classes. When Janet had last seen him he had been acquiring that phrase, "the privileged classes." He granted that a professional man could scarcely speak of himself as a member of the leisure classes. Feeling the need of an honorific label, he had

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hesitated between "the privileged classes" and "the cultivated classes," and had chosen the former as being what he told himself was nearer the truth. He was following Ellen with an air of calculated deliberation, his head thrown back, his eyebrows slightly raised.

Janet stared at him blindly. At first he was only an apposition, dreadfully concrete. It could not be that he was here in Grace's drawing-room, that he must come into her life even here in this guarded world! While she gazed at him unbelievably, a score of broken thoughts jangled in her mind—her father's remark:

"I am glad you are going to your cousin's; Janet, the life at the University has never pleased me; it is not the sheltered life I have always desired for you and given you; your cousin's home will afford that."

She thought of Cousin Liliás and her only partially suppressed hopes that among Grace's circle Janet would find some one else whom she could love; some one who could by no possible chance be "not quite—quite." And mingled with such racing thoughts were pictures of herself and Gregory—walking on the pier the night they were betrothed, measuring the strength of their love, sitting on a bench in the park, feeling sorry for other people whose love might not be eternal. Before her, torturingly, was that face, every line of which she had traced with loving fingers, the little quirking smile she had summoned so often, the close-laid hair, the eyes that used to forsake their steely expression for her sake.

Gregory's eyes met hers. He saw her tragic look, saw her grasp at the back of a chair for support; he read in her face a havoc which was perhaps greater than he had supposed, and he went on hurriedly behind Ellen, a little sorry, a little less pleased with himself.

Sallie's voice smote on Janet's ear.

"Honey, hush!" cried Sallie, too interested in what she was saying to be observant of Janet's face. "Do you see who's come in? That teacher man I was foolin' with

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a little this spring. I reckon I forgot to tell you he got engaged this summer."

Janet's face set like a stone.

"That Guyon woman was bound to get him," Sallie rattled on. "She took all his courses this summer; came to the University on purpose, I believe. I've seen her get up so close to him when he was consultin' with her about her work that he could have bit her hair. Doesn't that just show you what men are? Fickle is no word for it!"

Sallie's tone took on righteous indignation as she watched Ellen chatting to Grace and exhibiting Gregory.

"Never mind," said Sallie, virtuously, "when a poor backwoods sort of bachelor ma'ies a girl with money he has to shut off a lot of things he cain't ever tell her that he doesn't like in her. I reckon he's the sort that would tire of a girl that had nothing but love. He's looking over here right now."

Janet might have wondered with a kind of bitter humor what Gregory must be thinking of, when he saw, standing together, the two girls to whom he had made love. He was quite self-righteous and fatuous enough, and sufficiently devoid of humor to quote to himself:

This is the spray the Bird clung to,
Making it blossom with pleasure,
Ere the high treetop she sprung to
Fit for her nest and her treasure.
Oh, what a hope beyond measure
Was this poor spray's, which the flying feet hung to—
So to be singled out, built in and sung to!

Janet was far enough from rejoicing that she had been the spray. She turned blindly from Sallie, murmuring something about the room being too warm, and went into the library. She felt her way blunderingly until she found a chair where she sat, sick and trembling.

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Presently Grace came to her and leaned compassionately over her.

"I didn't dream they'd come, Janet. I haven't been to see Ellen since her engagement; but it's just like her assurance to call with him. She's forcing him down every one's throat in there."

There was an impatient tone in Grace's voice. Gregory to her was so palpably impossible that she felt it somehow as an affront that her cousin should care about him.

"I—I didn't know he was engaged," said Janet, in a strangled tone.

Grace smoothed her hair tenderly.

"No wonder you ran away, then."

But she conveyed the implication that it was a weakness to run away.

"I am going back, of course," said Janet, quietly.

"I wish you would, dear. I don't want your little Miss Keyes to feel neglected."

When Janet returned to the drawing-room, rather white and dimmed, Ada joined her with an intention of protecting her, for which the girl was grateful. Janet bowed to Ellen, who was obviously meaning to speak to her after she had attended to a few more important people. As she stood there among the soft, ebbing tide of Grace's friends everything within Janet cried out to be free from this love for Gregory. She could read him far more clearly than she could ever have done if he had gone on loving her. She wanted to feel a contempt for him, yet she asked herself, how could she do that when he had succeeded in thrusting into this world of Grace's, which was the one thing he had not been able to take away from her.

As she looked at Ellen introducing him to her friends, breaking for him the first reaches of the new ground which he was to cultivate, Janet knew Gregory at last for what he was, emotionally—intense after a fashion, but incapable of any real devotion and loyalty. She had thought at times during the summer that he might really

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have fallen in love with Sallie Keyes; she saw now that he had merely come to the time when he was ready to marry, and had been experimenting with all the ruthlessness of a child. She had been too ardent, and had soon worn out the shallow response which was all his nature could afford. Deep draughts were forbidden at his fountain. She had wearied him; and Sallie, by her very oppositeness, had attracted him. Ultimately he had chosen Ellen Guyon because she had what would most hold a person of the climbing, country-boy type—she had money, good nature, and position of a sort. He was too indiscriminating socially to know that Ellen, as a personality, ranked very much as an outlander among the people who had known her all her life.

Ellen was doing very well with him among her friends. Every tone or gesture of Ellen's which was sophisticated, which proclaimed her certainty of her own place, maddened Janet, had the effect of making her feel that she herself was an utter failure, that there was no place she could go where she might hold her own, might really belong. At last Ellen came up to her with cool eyes and held out her hand.

"Do let me wish you joy," said Janet, taking the hand; and some little detached self within her applauded her quiet intonations.

"Thank you very much," said Ellen, her tone a trifle too careless. "You knew him—Mr. Gregory—in college, I believe?"

"Yes, for the last two years," replied Janet.

The two measured each other, guessing about each other, wishing they knew more, wondering how much there was to know.

"I am the victor," Ellen's critical eyes said. "I can be worth a great deal to a man. I have position, money, brains; he will go far with me behind him. And he loves me; it isn't what I can bring him."

Janet's clouded eyes said:

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"I am younger than you, better-looking, cleverer, richer in personality. Money and position don't count in real loving. He can't love any one truly—and he's just marrying worldly advantage."

They matched their eyes for a moment, and then Ellen said:

"I hope you'll be happy in this way some day. I feel now as if I'd like every one in the world to be in love."

"Thanks so much for my share of that," said Janet, with a little laugh, "but I have a good many years yet before I need ask love any permanent questions."

If the thrust were a crude one, it told. Ellen passed on with a slight flush. Janet, her momentary sense of power gone, went over to a vacant table where she sat down helplessly. Her little flash of pride had passed, leaving her more humiliated than ever.

XIII

THE RELEASE OF CHARTERS

D⁴**URING** the summer when Janet had mourned the loss of Gregory she had not been able to think of him as belonging to any one else. The fact that he was not hers was large enough to engage all her capacity of sorrow. She had not actually suffered from jealousy. But to have seen him in the flesh, obviously pledged to Ellen Guyon, to have seen Ellen proudly presenting him to her friends as Janet had once hoped to present him to hers—that brought to Janet the realization that she had not yet played on all the chords of suffering.

Much of the waste which that careless voyager, Nature, permits in an unwanted love has to do with the torture of jealousy. It is a passion which is much more common to women than to men. Men have the instinct and the training to blunt the edge of any devastating feeling by work; women, who have been taught for ages to live in and by their emotions, are open prey to a destructive feeling as surely as they are molded by a constructive feeling. The only protection they have is whatever conventional armor of manner their class and creed may dictate.

Janet knew that in Grace's world she had come to the place where the most efficient kind of armor was provided. Grace and her sort took life precisely as they found it, without much attempt at criticism, and with almost none at reconstruction. For them, physically, it was a good world: it had given them an impregnable position; for their part, they would play the game in a sportsmanlike

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fashion. If they accepted as their right all physical goods, they could take, apparently unmoved, any spiritual stripes. The privileged women recognized well enough that, like women in any class, they were more helpless than their men; they had to take the world as their men made it for them; they could not create. But they covered their weakness with the very competent shield and buckler of their superior sophistication. They could not be wounded, because they refused to let themselves be wounded. If they jested at scars, inwardly they meant their own as well as other people's.

Janet thought of all this during the long, sleepless night after she saw Gregory. She knew that her feeling was too fierce and primitive to be subdued by any contemplation of Grace's code. The throbbing torment of her first days without Gregory had come back to her. In the midnight hours she had thought that with the coming of day the grief would be easier to bear. But the day brought her no relief. In a desire, almost frenzied, for some change in her terrible groove of pain she sent word to Charters to call. Here was one who had loved her, who perhaps cared for her still. Talking to him might dull a little her humiliation, her conviction that she was forever despicable because Gregory had jilted her.

That afternoon Charters' card was brought to her in the library. The man who presented it did so tentatively.

"This is not the sort of person we are accustomed to receive," his manner said. "Not a book-agent, or anything like that; so far you may trust my discretion. A begging-letter sort of person, perhaps, or possibly a reporter. I did not just see my way to dismissing him, but I don't quite like his being inside our doors."

"Show him in here, please, and tell Mrs. Ryder," Janet said.

Janet knew by the tone of the "Yes, Madam" that Charters had not asked for Grace. It was quite like him,

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she thought with an indulgent smile, and she could imagine Grace's annoyance if he prolonged his call.

Charters entered, his broad, fresh face aglow with content at seeing her.

"You can tell how glad I am you're back," he said, "by the fact that I've consented to come into the cave of one of the spoilsmen after you."

Ostentatiously he chose the simplest chair in the room, and added:

"The fellow was going to leave me in the hall, but I eyed him down, so then he put me in that big show-place that I suppose is the reception-room, and set another flunkey to watch me so that I shouldn't walk away with one of the oaken chests in my pocket."

Janet smiled, and said, wickedly:

"Perhaps if you stay long enough some people will drop in to tea—charming people."

Charters, in much alarm, grasped at his watch and studied the hour.

"I'd go now if I didn't want to see you so badly. It was nice of you to let me know you were back. But before this, you haven't been treating me very well. Why didn't you answer my letters this summer, Janet? Why did you hurry away without a word of good-by to me?"

The momentary animation that Janet had felt at seeing him had died away, leaving her face lifeless. The ravages of her night of calling in her heart upon Gregory were showing in her dimmed color and sad eyes. Charters had a quick picture of the girl who had walked with him on the lake-front a year and a half ago, full of vigor and happiness, he by her side longing to make it all a part of him. He felt a sudden hurt as he looked at her, but whether because she seemed unhappy or whether because of the pain that long-dead night had brought to him he did not ask himself. It meant something to him that he was with her, and that she had sent for him. Clumsily he pushed his chair a little nearer hers.

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"What's the matter, Janet?" he asked, softly.

Heavy tears fell from Janet's eyes. Until he spoke she had not fully decided to confide in him. Pride warned her to hide her heart from him, reminding her that if she needed solace she could get it from Grace or Ada. But a thrifty voice objected that she could not make over-drafts on them, and here was some one who for the moment could help. The inalienable fibers of dependence which are in every woman reached out toward Charters and found a sad comfort in clinging. She had dealt him a wound, and in some obscure, egoistic way this was a little salve for the wound Gregory had dealt her.

"I've been hurt," she said, with quivering lips, lifting her mournful eyes to his. "A man who loved me—a man I wanted—doesn't love me any more. I can't help thinking of him. I can't believe he has stopped loving me—"

Charters sat with his eyes downcast, trying not to wonder who this man might be. He understood Janet's failure to believe that the vanished lover could have given her up; he had found it hard to believe in the impossibility of winning Janet. Yet he found himself unable to tell her that he understood her grief. Some uncomfortable reluctance held his lips.

"But that is not all," went on Janet; "he says he loves some one else; the engagement has been announced, and still I feel as if he must come back to me. Still I can't think this—this other could blot me out—"

Charters reflected grimly that the man was not likely to come back to Janet; men so badly wanted never did. Also, he was sufficiently versed in masculine psychology to know that one woman can absolutely wipe out another in a man's consciousness. Men have little or no emotional memory. They say "beloved" to a woman with a happy forgetfulness of the hour when and the women to whom they used it before. A woman, however unwilling, keeps a mental record of her "beloveds."

"I don't want to make you uncomfortable," burst out

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Janet, "but it sometimes seems to me as if I cannot live in this misery. Tell me what you did when I—when I hurt you."

Charters looked back on those days when Janet had told him she could never love him. They seemed rather far away—a gray haze of painful hours when nothing seemed to matter much, and he put through many days of hard work with the philosophy that there were plenty of people in the world who did not get what they wanted, and if only he waited long enough something agreeable would happen—if it were nothing else but his dying day. Yet he hardly knew how to say this to Janet, and for all his sympathy for her he disliked attempting an analysis.

"You know, Janet," he said, gruffly, "your feelings plunge deeper than most people's."

He did not really understand how deep her feelings went. He considered her emotions stronger than his, but he honestly thought that she was exaggerating the effect on herself of the loss of this man she loved, and by dwelling on it was searing it into her mind. He believed that if she would only minimize its importance her grief would soon be less acute. Charters was quite unable to understand that pilotless state of the soul when will and courage have both been marooned in some unreachable port.

Janet felt his critical attitude. In some dim way she realized, better than Charters did, that this first moment of her dependence on him marked on his part a subtle withdrawal, a blunting of his idealization of her, an unconscious reservation of full sympathy. She had a feeling of bereavement, as if some stay on which she had counted had been taken away from her. She dropped her head, feeling that perhaps Charters, too, despised her because Gregory had ceased to love her.

Looking at her sharply, he divined that he had somehow hurt her. He tried to make amends.

"It's hard," he said, gently; "it must be harder for

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you even than it was for me, for you gave me no hope, and this man belonged to you for a while."

Janet looked at him silently, sadly.

"I tried work," he said. "Couldn't you go back to your books?"

Janet had a quick picture of the University campus; she saw the dignified gray buildings, with great reaches between of golden sunlight on greenswards, where students hurried from class to class. And suddenly their busy life struck her as futile and meaningless. What were they but little scurrying insects, each carrying away some worthless bit of treasure that was nothing but dust? What they were doing was no longer worth while to her.

"Ah, what use are mere books?" she sighed, impatiently.

She pushed her chair back and rose, standing in the window where the sunshine fell gleaming on her blue-black hair and on the thinner line of her cheek.

"After all," she said, drearily, "I don't see where I'm to get any help. How can you remember, hour by hour, how you drove away pain? How can even you give me anything but general advice? I know the cure for grief that every one under the sun offers. The sufferer is told to find some activity, to forget herself, and absorb herself in other people, to remember that one is only a little atom who counts for nothing in the long historical perspective—all this to drug the conviction that one does matter very much indeed. But I don't seem able to think of anything except of the way I feel. I am not of the type noble."

"I don't care how noble people are," Charters rejoined, "nor how much they give themselves to others; that very giving becomes their work, and is, therefore, touched with egotism. Has to be. Getting into some work that will mix you up with people and not books is what you need. I don't see how any reasonable person can live the kind of life the crowd you're with does—amusing themselves from morning till night."

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Janet smiled at him faintly. She did not have energy enough to tell him that he was judging a group of people of whom he knew nothing, since he stood so definitely outside them.

"Oh, I know what you mean by that smile," laughed Charters, glad to change the subject for a moment. "But look at Wilson! He belongs to that class, surely, and yet see how he tries to get away from his own crowd because he thinks they live parasitic lives."

Janet knew nothing of Wilson's views at first hand. She had received them only through the hard little medium of Sallie, whence she judged they had come rather distorted. Vaguely she translated Wilson's attitude as a kind of romantic energy, a desire to travel out of his own rut into some one else's. She was not sure that it was safe travel; she thought it might be costly to all concerned. But Charters' attitude seemed to her to be too violent; not tolerant enough. Unjustly she assumed that there was some obscure envy mixed with his impatience.

"My cousin Grace doesn't merely amuse herself," she said. "An attitude of being amused, if you like; but she has a very definite ideal of usefulness, though not for worlds would she call it that."

"Oh, I suppose there's a good deal in their point of view we could argue about," conceded Charters.

Janet pushed away any suggestion of argument, and turned back to a consideration of her grief.

"I don't believe I have the energy to do anything but drift," she sighed.

Like many a man before him, Charters wondered at the strange combination of weakness and strength there is in every woman. He did not understand why a woman could bear the long discomfort of creating a child, the pain of bearing it, and the strain and stress of rearing it, and all with relatively little complaint, and yet be unable to meet and overcome a mental pain.

"I wish I could do something to help," he said. "I

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told myself that feelings were out of place in a world where there is so much to be done."

"If I told myself that," Janet said, "I shouldn't believe it."

"But can't you tell yourself," said Charters, "that he isn't worth all this love and grief?"

Privately he thought that no one person was—a whole class or race, perhaps, but not one individual. Janet took him to mean that he thought any man who could not appreciate her great love must be unworthy. It was what she would have been glad to believe, for she wanted to despise Gregory. She smiled with a little of her old eagerness at Charters. Manfully he went on striking that chord.

That particular sort of consolation is a pretty crude sop to offer even to strong egotism. Character frequently plays a relatively small part in love affairs. A base man may love a good woman, or a good woman a base man with no sense of incongruity. A man may be scrupulously honorable in his business dealings, and in his social dealings with all persons except one woman who loves him and whose love has opened the door to that hidden brutality which demands prey in the one quarter where it is safe to take it. As a matter of fact, Gregory was not good enough for Janet; two or three years of time would have brought her slowly to the realization that she was a greater personality than he was; and, like any woman at once large-minded and clinging, she would have found it impossible to love a man who was not made on a greater plan than she was. Yet it was not the fact that Gregory had ceased to love her which had proved him unworthy.

For a little while, however, Janet let Charters drug her senses with this sophistry, and lulled her pain, telling herself that his nearness helped, and that his friendship was curative. As he talked Charters grew more and more elated. At first he supposed the elation was there because he was helping Janet. In those old days of pain he had been

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prone to wish he could serve her in some fashion, and now the wish was granted.

But as he rose to go and took her two hands in his he realized, conscious-stricken, that this was not the reason for his elation. He did not quite understand what had happened to him, but Janet did. She had a keen eye in these days for reading any emotion that concerned her own case. She realized what Charters would have been unwilling to admit, that his exhilaration was due to his first sense of freedom from the thralldom of a love which had given him much but had cost him much.

He pressed Janet's two hands and looked at her with eyes of honest friendship, not at all knowing that the moment marked a change in their relations. Janet let him go, and then she fell to sobbing in a storm of irrational loneliness. Charters' emotional defection seemed to make more irreparable the loss of Gregory, more incurable her feeling that she must be scorned because she had been jilted.

XIV

WILSON CHOOSES

THE next day had in itself something of the softness of June. In the afternoon, Janet, languid again from a night of grief, was walking on the Lake Shore Drive. She had turned her head away from the smug, handsome houses, in one of which Ellen Guyon lived, and all of which seemed to be grotesquely reminding her of her failure to hold Gregory.

"What," they asked her, "could love avail against the advantages we can offer? And don't fancy that we cannot enfold our worldly gauds with a veil of sentiment."

Janet was gazing sometimes at the blue lake, and sometimes down the shining white walk, peopled with others, who were, like herself, responding to the June warmth of the day. One of these slowly grew into familiarity. There was but one person she knew who had that long, lazy stride as if the earth were like the velvet of the desert. As she looked at him she said to herself that if only her life had not turned out so badly there would have been some pleasure in seeing Wilson approach, his striking blue eyes really welcoming her. But, she thought broodingly, he, too, would soon feel her self-scorn, guess her failure.

"Well met," he said. "Where are you walking?"

"Anywhere; I thought of watching the children on that stretch of sand."

He turned with her, and they found seats where they could contemplate the little white-clad children of the Drive playing on their immaculate shore. They were

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well guarded; for almost every child a uniformed nurse, who carried gleaming tin-pails and smooth, fair wooden shovels, and who put the little creature in her charge where it would have the minimum of trouble in capturing its sand, and no possible chance of contamination. The nurses gauged each other by the social standing of their mistresses, and spoke or were silent according to those standards. More than one of the uniformed figures sat beside her charge with a sense of slight which the consciousness of their common badge of service did nothing to mollify. The children, too young to realize standards, played stolidly and made a pleasant picture for Wilson and Janet.

"Well-scrubbed little cubs," he said, "and very different from a lot I saw this morning."

"Yes?" questioned Janet.

"Ryder is out of town to-day, and I've been attending to some odds and ends of business which took me away from the office. I had occasion to go over to the factory—Levy, Schwartz and Guyon, you know. They don't grow children like these over in that region."

Janet thought, irrelevantly, that a man with such a strong face as Wilson's, and who conveyed such a sense of ability to achieve and create, ought not to be at another man's bidding, not even Harrison Ryder's. He ought to have one of those houses on the Drive such as his father had had. Sallie Keyes had prophesied to Janet that he would.

"By the way," Wilson added, "Mrs. Ryder told me not long ago that it's due to your suggestion that I am back in all this."

Janet had almost forgotten that she was in any way responsible for Wilson's connection with Ryder. It was a painful memory, because it was associated with Gregory; moreover, she had caught the lightest hint of irony in his tone.

"I'm sure I didn't have anything to do with it, really,"

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she said. "Logically, you'd have gone in with some of your own friends."

"My father's friends," he corrected. "If one has to accept favors, it's a little less humiliating to accept them from men of one's father's generation."

"You're very proud," Janet thought, "and, much as I like Harrison Ryder, I don't think I should care to be one of his secretaries. I fancy he'd have too much of the 'Come here, you' manner in his own office."

One of the white-clad babies set up a defiant shriek. A little neighbor, true to a predatory nature which he had come by honestly, had been appropriating the shovels of the children nearest him. One child had accepted the robbery and one, trusting in a universe which had never failed him, had protested. Two nurses administered justice in a world which naturally knows it not, and the little select community went on with its sand building.

"Lucky baby to have some one to look after him," said Wilson. "Where I was this morning the gutter babies fought their battles unaided by any ample providence. I'm lucky, too, Miss Bellamy," he added, "to have providence step in and give me something over three times the money I was getting, just at a time when I needed it."

Janet recollected something she had heard about Wilson having come to Chicago to be near his father. One would need more money in Chicago, and, according to Sallie Keyes, one would need more money anywhere than one got.

"It would be too banal to say anything about the increased cost of living," she murmured.

"I don't mean I'm thinking of money," he said, slowly, "so much as I am of freedom. It's a curse to be born with the desire to be free."

Janet kept her eyes fixed on the children, watching how their little efforts cast them hunkering backward; then she said, abruptly:

"Do you mean that you don't like your work, Mr. Wilson?"

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"Not that," he replied. "A man has to like his work if he is going to be a man and not a machine; the difficulty is that in what I do for Ryder I have to forget that I'm dealing with human beings. I have to look on all life and all things as machine-made."

"I can see how that would hamper one's freedom," said Janet.

People were always wanting something, of course, she mused, wearily. They wanted a man to love them who wouldn't, or they wanted some one else's sand-shovel, or they weren't suited by their work.

"Life is going to exact a big percentage from us in some fashion," she said.

Wilson found her large, sad gaze haunting. He wondered if she were unhappy. Her face seemed a little thinner than it had been in the spring, and there was a languor in her manner which might mean that she had been hurt. He felt sorry and interested, and, curiously, his sympathy for her made him wish to speak of himself.

"I'm not sorry, Miss Bellamy, that I'm not really a part of all this any more," he said, indicating the children and the splendid houses behind him. "I've gained more humanly from being pitched out of it than I could have gained if I'd been allowed to stay in it. If I were really cautious-minded, I suppose I'd add that perhaps to gain humanly is no real gain; but, you see, I've got convictions."

She withdrew her gaze from the children and looked at him inquiringly.

"I mean," he explained, "that when I was in college I tried to think a little about all this—the rich here, and the poor back there. Perhaps I wasn't so easily content as most questioners of my age; but after my sensibilities were dulled a little by the good time I was having I was satisfied by the theory of one of my professors. He said that no individual could help; that all these trade-union movements and minimum-wage conferences weren't going to do anything of real value; that the only hope for the

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people at large would be a revision of the tariff, an income tax, and the revision of land values—single tax. He said that before anything could be done some strict and long economic thinking would have to take place."

Three little gutter children had come from their habitat and somehow found their way to this paradise of the sands. The uniformed nurses were gazing on them with disfavor; they meant possible germs and a marring of the landscape. The new-comers stared at the little white rulers, who stared back at them, imitating the attitude of the nurses. The gutter children selected a strip of sand, and with sticks and pebbles began their own building. The nurses gauged the distance between the two worlds, and felt safe.

Janet smiled.

"So," she said, again indicating the children, "what your professor meant amounted to saying that those two groups would be as they are for a long time to come."

"As I look back on it," Wilson went on, "I accepted that. I dare say I wanted to be comfortable. But I can't accept it now, though it may be the only sound view. After our—er—family crash I began to see life from a different angle. The first work I got was in the Bureau of Charities; you can guess what that brought me up against. I couldn't stand it; in a way it was too grotesque a caricature of what had befallen my own people. There were other reasons, so I went to Wisconsin."

"But there isn't much poverty there," protested Janet.

"More than you know of. Certainly there were plenty of people and plenty of chance for thinking on the part of a young man whom the insurance business only slightly occupied."

The gutter children were building more rapidly and expertly than their rich neighbors. Their manipulations had carried them several feet closer to the little rulers, some of whom had suspended their shovels and were staring in discomfort at these grimy human beings whom they knew were an obnoxious intrusion in a perfectly

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scrubbed world. Two of the nurses arose and advised the gutter children to play farther off. They spoke with the conscious authority of those powerful enough to appropriate to themselves whatever public ground they fancied; the little blots on creation may have known their rights, but they also knew the futility of obtruding them in the face of might. They gathered up their cheap property and chose a safer territory.

"It's all pictures to me—all that," Janet said. "Mr. Charters told me you were interested in such things, just as he is. But I haven't much taste so far for reforming the world; I want to reform myself first."

She ended in a jesting tone, but her plaintive expression belied her voice, and again Wilson wondered what life had been doing to her. He shook away his curiosity, and said:

"Charters wants me to live with him on the West Side. There is an apartment-building there half filled with what Charters calls 'people of our sort.' The first reformer I ever knew—a man named Blair—is going to be there—a lawyer; you may have heard of him. But I haven't my plans made for the year yet."

He spoke musingly, for he was thinking of Sallie Keyes. He had been going out to call on her when he had met Janet, and there was still time. Janet saw his hand move toward his watch-pocket and pause half-way. She rose.

"I must be going back," she said. "I got here only Monday, and I'm not half unpacked. I must telephone to Sallie; we did not really have a talk day before yesterday. Don't you think she is looking a bit tired from her summer, Mr. Wilson?"

As she spoke she was wishing half vaguely that she and Wilson were as good friends as she and Charters, and wondering flickeringly whether Sallie was quite good enough for him, assuming that he loved her. She did not understand that her thought was born of a desire to

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attract a splendid man strongly—not have him love her necessarily, but like her well enough to prove to her that she could interest some one who was bigger than Gregory. Then she had a fear that she had been a bit disloyal toward Sallie, and a quick sense of sympathy for her friend. What if Sallie's very assurance about Wilson covered a real fear? What if she loved him sincerely and were waiting and hoping as Janet had waited and hoped? What hard-fibered creatures men were!

"Poor little Sallie!" cried Janet, involuntarily.

Though she spoke of Sallie, her tone was pregnant with feeling for herself, and again Wilson was touched. When Janet's vividness was a little dimmed she had something very like beauty. Now as she gazed straight in front of her, the fine eyebrows raised slightly, her red mouth drooping, the upper lip drawn into a little helpless curve, there was something very appealing about her. It was characteristic of Wilson's chivalry to feel an irrational wish that all women might be protected from the hard things of life.

He left her at the Ryder house and took a street-car for the South Side. During his hour-long journey he forgot Janet, and thought of Sallie; but his thoughts of Sallie were influenced, subtly, by his new sympathy for Janet. He was not a vain man, but he could not be blind to the fact that Sallie was immensely attracted by him. Her lures were perhaps less transparent than she supposed, though Wilson was too gallant to let himself think of her as conscious of them. She had betrayed her feeling once or twice, and he was sufficiently sensitive to feel any demand for affection. Moreover, his chivalrous attitude toward women had been intensified by the shock he had received when his brother's rejected fiancée had taken her life.

Sallie had meant a good deal to him during his stay in Wisconsin. She was not like any other girl he had ever known; a curious combination of directness and with-

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drawal. Her piquancy and humor charmed him; her ineffable common sense commanded his respect, for he did not often find it to that degree among girls. A certain occasional spitefulness and even fierceness of temper only amused him, as he might have been amused by the antics of a kitten. He did not see how he could have borne the arid time in Wisconsin without her. In Chicago, too, she had meant a good deal to him; but he had been preoccupied by his father's problems and by his real disinclination to continue his association with Harrison Ryder, to put himself definitely on the side of those who owned the splendid houses with the oblivious backs.

Sallie, he was pretty sure, was on the side of the splendid houses. He pursed his lips when he thought of Sallie's frank taste for flesh-pots, and then suddenly he saw her poignant little face, with a touch of tenderness in the deeps of her eyes, and he smiled half tenderly. His cogitations had led him nowhere, when at last he rang the bell of the dormitory where she lived, and sat in the hall waiting for her. He watched her as she came down-stairs, her little face grave, her gait slow. She saw him, and her steps quickened, her face sprang into animation. That drooping moment he had surprised made Wilson think of Janet.

"I didn't expect you to-day," Sallie said. "It's right late for you."

"Won't you come down-town with me and dine somewhere?" he asked her.

"Wait till I get my hat!" she cried, with all the zest of a child.

That delight in any proposition (made by a man) was one of Sallie's most attractive traits. She was at her best, and he was at his most appreciative by the time they had found a little table in the dining-room of the new hotel, which seemed to Sallie the last word in luxury and good taste. She took it so prettily for granted, she had such a flattering way of assuming that Wilson had honored it in choosing it, and she was so charming and so pathetic,

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too, that most of Wilson's secret reservations vanished. It was too romantic to assume that a perfect mate could be born; companions had to be made each for each, by association. Over the little pink-shaded table he began to talk to Sallie about his ideals, his half-formed plans; and as he spoke they took shape more definitely. No one, certainly not the girl who listened to him, could have mistaken his meaning that his aims came first in his life and love and a woman second.

"Some day, Sallie," he finished, "I mean to find some work more congenial to me than this; perhaps it might not pay more than two hundred dollars a month; it's not the money I care for, but the congeniality. Some day I mean to live in those apartments I was telling you about last week—and at which, I am afraid, you scoffed."

His eyes softened as they rested on her, but his voice was very stern when he added:

"Nobody—nobody whatever—shall have the power to divert me from those intentions—not under any circumstances."

Sallie felt that the moment was a significant one. She tried to meet it by a sauciness of spirit, but in spite of herself all her little artificialities fell from her. She looked at him quite steadily, and rather sadly, while she said:

"If the way you conduct your life means as much to you as all that, Dick, no one who cared about you would try to interfere."

He recognized the surrender, and he was touched and happy. He leaned across the table to her and said, tenderly:

"Will you come with me, dear?"

Tears rose to Sallie's eyes. She drooped toward him, and he read in her look how much she cared and how afraid she had been. He thought as he often did of the girl who had so insanely loved his brother, and he determined that little Sallie was shedding her last tears. A new tenderness for her sprang up in his heart. He told him-

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self that he was not of the number of men who can love deeply and devotedly, but he did love her, and all of his loyalty and service should be hers.

Sallie twinkled away her tears, and her ruling spirit reasserted itself.

"I cert'n'y did think you never were goin' to propose," she said. "I've a great mind to say 'no.' You don't deserve me."

She was very far from realizing what life in the grimy region of the West Side was going to mean. Deeply rooted in her was a belief that she could make any man do what she liked, and already she was on the way to forgetting how fearful she had been lest one man was going to resist her. She looked around at the other little shaded tables and felt at one with all the well-dressed people, unconsciously assuming that she was going through life neighbored by such desirables, and leaning on a man whose ideals she appreciated far less than she did his charm and force.

Late that evening, when Janet was going to bed, Sallie summoned her to the telephone.

"Honey-bug, I thought I'd tell you. I'm going to be ma'ied to Dick Wilson," she said, lazily. "I'm mighty tired of all the other men in the world, and don't forget you're to be bridesmaid."

Janet wished her joy, her voice trembling a little, for she was still too badly hurt to like to think of lovers. Moreover, she realized that she did not want Wilson to be engaged.

"I'm going quite mad," she said to herself. "What does it matter to me who Richard Wilson and Jimmy Charters love, when I care for no one but Mark?"

"It will be announced soon," Sallie went on. "Tell Mrs. Ryder, won't you, honey? Maybe you can bring her out to see me."

"We'll come," Janet promised, with a little smile at Sallie's transparency.

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When she went to bed she did not fall immediately, as was her wont, into a bitter musing about Gregory. She thought, instead, of Wilson, not at all as Sallie's lover, but as he had sat with her on the Lake Shore Drive, his fine, dark face intent, as he told her by what route he had come to his present interests, his blue eyes fixed on the two groups of babies, the little white-clad children of privilege and the sordid gutter babies. When she fell asleep she dreamed that he had tried to make them play together; but the nurses beat at him with their umbrellas. Then the lake swept in and carried away the gutter babies, and the little children of the rich went placidly back to their play.

XV

JANET'S MILD ADVENTURE

GRACE'S car stopped in the middle of the West Side park, and the chauffeur, springing from his seat, opened the door for Janet, his admirably unobtrusive air saying he was there, and yet not there. Janet had found the car too stifling; it was too full of her own thoughts of Gregory and Ellen Guyon. During the week that she had been in Chicago it seemed to her that she had met them everywhere. Even when she was alone they seemed to press in upon her. It was unbearable to sit in the car beside Grace, tranquil and apparently impregnable. Janet wanted to walk until her tumult abated.

"I do think you're absurd," Grace warned Janet. "This park is fully five miles from home, and it looks like rain."

"I've nothing on that will spoil," Janet said, "and I'm so restless, Grace."

"My dear Janet—it's growing-pains," Grace retorted; "spiritual ones, and I do wish they were as brief as the physical ones."

She looked at Janet sympathetically, for all her mocking tones. Janet smiled back at her as she dismounted from the car. If Janet could have seen deeper she would have caught a hint of impatience behind the sympathetic look, as if Grace would have said:

"You've cried long enough, you child! If you shed any more tears for this grief you'll have none left for the griefs yet to come, and no energy at all for the smiles which are our destiny as well as tears. Other girls lose their lovers,

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and mothers lose their children, and wives see their husbands slipping away from them. The world can't stand still for you, Janet. Do as we all do; find something you want that isn't likely to be taken away from you."

Janet watched the car roll away with relief. Grace was like everybody else, she thought, enmeshed in a great conspiracy to pretend it was a good world, and that living in it was well worth while. Why not tell the truth and say if one couldn't have what one wanted one would rather not play? It might not be sportsmanlike, but it was honest.

She began to walk slowly through the park, which was almost deserted at that hour of the morning. Coming slowly toward her was a girl, on whom she fixed her eyes, pondering indifferently on the marvel of human locomotion, and wishing that interest in the commonplace facts of life were enough to fill one's mind and leave no place for longings.

As the girl came nearer Janet saw that she was the young Russian Jewess whom Charters had introduced to her the year before—Sonya Riborsky. The girl was walking rather languidly, her somber eyes remote, her heavy braids drooping under an ugly hat. Janet hesitated.

"How do you do?" she said. "I am afraid you don't remember me."

Sonya had the effect of bringing her deep eyes to Janet from an unmeasurable distance. After a moment she took Janet's extended hand.

"Yes, I remember you," she said, rather tonelessly. "You are his friend—Mr. Charters'."

Janet pitied her for the unconscious betrayal carried in "his."

"It is a pleasant day, isn't it?" she said. "I hope winter is still a long way off."

"I hate the winter," Sonya sighed. "Coal is so dear, and people get out of work, and it seems so long before they can get enough to eat any more or be warm."

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Evidently, she felt that she ought to apologize for her seeming freedom, for she added:

"The man I work for is sick this morning, so I got nothing to do. I could save the car-fare walking home, and see a sick friend on the way."

The two looked at each other for a moment, evidently feeling that they had nothing more to say. Sonya waited for Janet to make the first movement.

"Good-by," Janet said. "I hope I shall see you again some day."

"Good-by," Sonya returned.

Her glance was inscrutable; but Janet thought she read in it a question: Why should they meet again? Janet looked on the world as a place which at least owed one physical consideration. One's heart might be broken, indeed, but one had the right to food and lodging, books and agreeable friends, respect from all one's fellows, and deference from some of them. The weather was to be considered as to whether it was agreeable to walk in or not. Sonya looked on the weather as a cause of bodily pain or well-being. When it was cold it was not a question of not going for long walks, for the people she knew would not care to waste their time, energy, and shoe-leather in that way; but it was a question of the impossibility of keeping warm, of getting proper clothing, of clinging to "jobs"; even of finding food without applying for charity and being "investigated."

Janet walked on quickly. The first few drops of a cold rain had begun to fall; she looked behind her at Sonya. The girl had quickened her pace, too, and was some distance away. Approaching her was a man who evidently knew her, for he lifted his hat before he reached her and called out some greeting. The rain increased, and Janet hurried on. Presently a driving wind rose, the drops came faster, and she looked about her for some place of shelter. Not far away was a refreshment-house with a wide-roofed porch. She got under this just as the rain came down heavily.

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She felt so content to be out of the wet, so concerned merely with shelter and her success in obtaining it, that she began to wonder if Sonya's feeling for Charters was not diminished by the fact that she had to work for her living, that she was surrounded on all sides by people whose mental absorptions had to do with primitive problems. Perhaps, Janet reflected, if she herself had had to earn the few hundred dollars she spent yearly she would not have been so disintegrated with grief for Gregory and jealousy against Ellen Guyon. Perhaps it was part of the general waste of life that Soyna and she each should have something for which to envy the other.

The man who had been speaking to Sonya was running toward Janet. Curiously she watched his long, easy leaps. She saw that he meant to share the porch with her, and at that she looked unconscious of him. He came under cover with a little relieved outburst of breath, shook himself vigorously, showering down heavy drops, and, taking off his hat, scattered a stream from its brim. He was tall, and rather bony, with flexible, easily held shoulders. His black hair grew in an irregular line about his forehead. His was a dark, Celtic face capable of many expressions; his eyes were set with a slant that seemed almost exaggerated; his fine eyebrows made a long angle. He was evidently close to forty, yet he had all the vitality and vim of a boy. Janet felt, almost resentfully, that here was a personality which invaded one. She looked at him twice, for she felt sure that she had seen him before.

When the new-comer had shed as much rain as he could, he walked away from the pool he had made. Janet noted that he was standing as far from her as he could and still escape the wet; but she also felt that he was looking at her intently. She stared straight in front of her at the trees lashing in the heavy wind. Once she looked aside, involuntarily, and caught his fixed glance. She turned away her head, annoyed, but wondering why she should have a quick vision of the lake that lay half

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a mile from her Wisconsin home, and of a young farmer in his shirt-sleeves shocking corn in a field that dipped almost to the water's edge.

The man approached her.

"If you are Miss Janet Bellamy," he said, in a rather quizzical tone, "you ought to speak to me, for if I hadn't fished you out of the lake when you went voyaging in a leaky and borrowed rowboat I'm afraid you wouldn't be here."

Janet turned. In him she saw a farmer's son by whom, as a child, she had occasionally sat when he was resting from his work. He had told her Gaelic fairy stories; but Cousin Liliias heard of this adventure and forbade Janet to speak to "strange people." Cousin Liliias, however, had not forbidden this strange person to save the little girl's life. Janet had taken an abandoned shell of a rowboat and pushed out in it, meaning to sail to the land of fairies and find her prince. The young farmer had happened to look up from his work just as the boat, a good many yards from shore, was sinking under the child. He had waded out, chin high, and rescued her. Janet had been frightened enough, and had had a keen enough sense of realism, not to confound this savior with the fairy prince. She had never seen him since.

"Oh yes," she said; "indeed, I haven't forgotten how you got me out of the water and took me in the house to your mother, who dried me and comforted me."

"But you have forgotten my name," he accused her, acutely.

Janet colored.

"It seems ungrateful, doesn't it," she said, "when one can remember the name of the corner grocer or the postmaster who had nothing to do with saving one's life?"

She spoke quite as if she enjoyed having her life; and for the moment she did. Janet had always had a desire for things to happen; even the tiniest adventure as a child had thrilled her, and she had enough of the childish

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spirit left to feel that there was something picturesque in meeting, after all these years, the man but for whom she would not have known Gregory and joy and grief. He was a presentable person, though evidently he did not belong to the world of Grace Ryder.

"Blair—Charles Blair," he said; "but the name wouldn't mean anything in Wisconsin now. My mother sold the farm fifteen years ago, when my father died, and went back to her old home in the north of the state. I had been away for half a dozen years before that, just going back for vacations."

Janet knotted her brows for a moment. The name did mean something to her—something faintly unpleasant. After a moment she remembered; some years before she had been present when Sallie's uncle, old Jeremy Keyes, had spoken of Blair as a lawyer doing well enough in Chicago, but full of crack-brained anarchistic ideas, so that even his own wife couldn't accept them and had gone back to her people.

"I have just met some one else I used to know when I lived in Chicago. I've been away for about four years," Blair said. "Years ago, when she was a little mite playing about the settlements where I lived, I used to tell her fairy tales, too; little Sonya Riborsky."

Janet impatiently pushed away the criticism of old Jeremy Keyes against Blair; after all, what did the old farmer know about crack-brained ideas? And if Blair had been accepted by settlement people he must be conservative in his actions, at least.

"I have met Miss Riborsky," she said. "She's beautiful."

"Very pretty," agreed Blair. "Character, too; a rather tragic, splendid type, capable of all sorts of bigness. She has a good mind; she won't always be a stenographer."

Janet wondered if all men measured the world in terms either of success or of work. Harrison Ryder frankly

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gauged a man by his ability to make money or to keep others from getting it after it was made. He had also a sincere respect for success in the accomplishments more directly the outcome of physical personality—such as good riding and shooting and polo-playing. Blair might have anarchistic ideas; but he, too, cared for success, or he would not be estimating Sonya in terms of her possible achievement. Even Charters, who had himself known an unsatisfied love, seemed to think the real meaning of life was work. All of them would condemn or ignore or minimize mere emotions; they would not think a girl's life ought to be measured by her defeat in love, nor would they have thought that Sonya's feelings for Charters ranked in importance and, above all, in permanence with her ability to rise in the work she had chosen.

Blair began to talk of people and places she had known in Wisconsin, and while the storm kept on unabated they drew for each other sketches of the men and women who passed up and down the streets of the little Wisconsin village, and of the fields and woods which were the setting for those far-away people.

"I shall never go back there," Blair said, abruptly. "I'd rather remember it. I know it's just as full, relatively, of all that's awry and hard as Chicago; but I mean to think of it as I used to, before I knew there was anything wrong with it. I've got no such illusions about Chicago. I left here thinking I wouldn't come back, but whatever part of the world I've been in, I've found just Chicago; the same graft and blindness and patience and stupidity and plutocracy."

This man was talking much as Charters talked, only with a power that Charters lacked. Then Janet remembered suddenly that Wilson had spoken of a "reformer," a lawyer named Blair, who had been his friend years before.

"I wonder if you are not the Mr. Blair Mr. Wilson knows—Richard Wilson?"

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"Dick Wilson? Indeed, I know him," said Blair, heartily. "I hope we're going to be together this winter. I'm to live in the Harrowgate Apartments—doubtless you've never heard of them? I hope Wilson will come; but he's engaged to be married, and I believe the young woman in the case is hanging back."

Janet smiled a little; "the young woman in the case" was far from looking on herself as the uninspired obstacle Blair seemed to regard her.

"Some little goose hampering his freedom," went on Blair, irritably. "When we have socialism, Miss Belamy, or some system of living where we can do away with meaningless laws, including marriage laws, we sha'n't have sacrifices made of the freedom of either men or women."

Janet colored. She had read novels and articles in which there was talk of free love. Ada had alluded to it once or twice in passing as an expensive proposition. Janet had scarcely thought about the subject, but if she had tried to her bent would have been to oppose free love. If she had been religious she would have said that the laws of God were for marriage and against any other relation. As she was merely intensely loving, strongly monogamous, and not daring, she had the instinct shared by nearly all the women in the world—to bind her man for the sake of her own safety.

As she stood by Blair, his words still sounding in her ears, she felt an embarrassment as keen as that she had felt the first time she had seen a chorus dancing in a musical comedy, or the first time she had been to a play built on "the eternal triangle," and had listened to the characters alluding to their irregular relations. Janet had no share of the scientific spirit inherent in some women which makes them willing to hear naked facts discussed, partly for the pleasure of divorcing them from any emotion. Her color grew deeper, and she said:

"The rain is slackening. I must go on."

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It was a moment or two before Blair understood. He was used to knowing women who took the doctrines of trial marriages or free love, or any liberality of sex relations, as worthy at least of consideration, because plenty of people with brains thought them so. Such women could listen to any remark under the sun without in the least blanching. He looked at Janet disapprovingly. So she was one of the young persons who had been sheltered, who by virtue of false training had a sidling view toward life, who looked at it askance, half understanding, seeing and not seeing. Here was a girl who could not judge life except through a haze of emotion. She could never think of a man in love with her without a thrill either of ardor or of distaste.

She had, he guessed, keen imagination. Under that thin surface of quiet assurance he divined an attempt at suppressions and exclusions. Blair considered the world as a place of strife in which a few enlightened people carried torches. He saw himself, frankly, as bearing one of unusual size; he was very willing to light other people's torches for them—particularly that of an interesting girl who was doubtless unaware that she ought to be a light-bearer. There was no doubt that he would not have been so keen to create ideas, or vivify curiosities in a woman of middle age, as in this attractive girl whom he had known when she was a child.

He played on that string now to take the coldness out of her face.

"In those days when I used to tell you fairy tales," he said, quickly, "I hadn't done any thinking at all. I took the world as I found it, for the reason that I didn't really see it. But now I do see it as a place where the good laws are not enforced, and the bad ones which should be smashed still prevail. Men and women ought to be freer than they are—industrially, sexually, mentally—all ways. Too much prejudice and privilege, and sickness and sin and poverty."

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Janet did not listen very closely to what he said. The precepts of Cousin Liliás had been too well administered for that. But there was something about him that convinced her of his sincerity. She had a vague feeling that any one who had been good to her as a child must be rather a nice person, and she had faith in him as Wilson's friend. Moreover, she had not known Ada Sargent so long and so well without having come to believe that people had a right to think what they pleased, so long as that thinking was not destructive to the healthy elements in society and in the individual. She did not know enough about Blair's thinking yet to judge it. What she objected to was listening to anything which embarrassed her.

She left the shelter of the porch and stepped into the muddy road. The park had almost the dreariness of a blasted heath; the wind was still high, and a penetrating cold had set in.

"I suppose you'll take a street-car home," Blair said. "May I put you safely on it?"

He smiled with a friendliness that forgave her for being a little unshelled creature in a world which needed its energy for other purposes than for protection. His smile took no account whatever of the fact that he had embarrassed her. She smiled back at him faintly.

"It would be too fatiguing to tramp all the way to the North Shore Drive," she remarked.

He looked at her consideringly, and the glance said: "Is that your habitat? I might have guessed it."

Aloud he remarked:

"I wonder if by chance you have met Charters? He's a friend of Wilson's."

"Yes, I know him," Janet said.

"I'm thinking of asking him to go into law-partnership with me," said Blair, in a meditative tone. "But I hope you'll not mention it to him, if you should see him. I've not quite made up my mind."

Some people found Blair's odd confidences attractive;

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but not so Janet. Again she was embarrassed; it seemed to her that he was going rather too fast, was presuming on an acquaintance which had lapsed for fifteen years. Yet the impersonality of his tone was disarming.

"That would be very nice for Mr. Charters," she said, with an assumption as unconscious as it was soothing that Blair was a successful lawyer.

As they stood at the corner waiting for the car, which was a block away, Blair said, rapidly:

"Miss Bellamy, all women ought to do some direct thinking about the relations of men and women. They've been all wrong, especially in marriage—sentimentalized, commercialized, brutalized sometimes; it hurts the race. The race is always hurt if a woman is a chattel, or if neither man nor woman is free. There has been no possibility of real friendship between the sexes, no such thing as genuine shoulder-to-shoulder comradeship. All this nonsense about love, as if love could be chartered, chained down."

The street-car drew to a stop at the corner, and Janet got on with a murmured good-by. As it was not an hour when the cars were crowded, she was not subjected to any enforced contact with her fellows. It was the better for her peace of mind, for the conversation with Blair had disturbed her. At first she was irritated at his last words, spoken because he knew she would have time neither to get away nor to change the conversation. Yet she was faintly amused, too; it was rather like the little she remembered of Blair. When he had told her fairy stories he always insisted on a strong lesson before the end, under which the small listener had fretted, as retarding the romance of the prince and the princess. She smiled as she recollected this. Blair was a born reformer; he could not help trying to reshape people and laws and the whole world.

As she jolted eastward she thought of what he had said with, as was inevitable, a personal application. The rela-

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tions of men and women might be all wrong; her experience had been too narrow for her to judge that. But it was unthinkable that the world could ever remain stable if marriage were ignored; that would take away all the sacredness—make of love nothing but acquaintanceship and passion and chemistry. Janet blushed at her own thoughts. She grew indignant at Blair when she remembered what he had said of Sallie and Wilson. Because those two were not quite agreed as to where they should live, forsooth, there should be no such thing as marriage, so Wilson might have his own way! Blair would have smiled at her bad logic, but he would have forgiven her any unfairness because of the vividness of her face. Whenever Janet was aroused her expressions borrowed from somewhere an odd beauty. Yet after she had thoroughly disposed of Blair, and settled against the worn back of the seat, she found that she could not get rid of him so easily as she had thought. His words kept coming back to her, and his face, with the dark lock of hair bisecting the forehead, and the heavy, black eyebrows making a long, slanting angle. She tried to dismiss him by saying to herself that he had no place in her new world; and then she wondered if she would ever see him again.

"What is the matter with me?" she moaned, inwardly. "Why do I have to keep thinking of some man? Just because Mark jilted me, why should I want an especial friendship from Jimmy Charters or Mr. Wilson, or even from this Blair? Has being jilted made me unwomanly, or just unseated my reason?"

She was too unversed in experience to know how natural her feeling was. Novels show us the jilted girl as besieged by some other suitor who yearns to pick up this precious jewel of love which an unworthy man has cast away. In actuality a jilted girl is usually too stricken to make herself attractive to any possible lover. The man who has left her has taken too much away with him; he has robbed the coffer which, nevertheless, had no wealth

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for him. Yet what the jilted girl needs is just a loyal lover, whom she can tell herself is of more worth than the false lover. Only such a one can give her back her self-respect, can show her that her suffering has not necessarily been useless, can restore to her a conviction of her charm and desirability. All innocently Janet's quest for a devoted friendship was an obscure expression of some such need.

XVI

THE LITTLE PERSON'S VERDICT

MADAME NATURE'S ingenuity of wastefulness evinces itself strikingly in the torments of inner conflict; nothing is so wearing and useless as a divided spirit. For weeks Janet saw herself as beating about in circles, making no progress toward restoration, finding nothing that interested her. There were days when she recognized that she was a prey to far too much emotion, and that her will was exceedingly ill-regulated; sometimes she would resolve to find some philosophy which would rehabilitate her. Religion she rejected; on the one hand, she was too skeptical, and, on the other hand, she had a childish feeling that if there really were a God He would have seen to it that her heart should not be broken.

There were other days when she embraced her misery helplessly, being willing for those closest to her to condemn her for her lack of pride, considering that this condemnation somehow freed her from the obligation to make of herself once more a livable human being. Janet could hardly have told when her first real progress was made. It came out in a resolution not to leave a house she had entered if she found Gregory or Ellen Guyon present, but to look at them until the sight of them should callous her aching nerves. Though the resolution was born of desperation, it served as well as if it had been born of sheer courage.

Another step forward was her determination to fill every hour of her day and leave no time for brooding. She delighted Grace with the interest she assumed in all the plans

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that were made for her. Presently she was seeing a great deal of those of Grace's friends who were of her own age, and she filled her day exactly as they did theirs, with lessons in French and in fencing, with luncheons, calls, teas, dinners, and bridge, passing from one thing to another with the same light ease which her companions showed.

At first it was a desperate pretense. She felt, hour by hour, that she was merely acting, and her one concern was to keep her new friends from seeing that she was acting. Often she was still afraid that they would divine that she had been scorned by a man and would despise her. Yet in her sanest moments she knew that they were ignorant of her private affairs, and were willing to take her at the face value which the powerful and popular Grace Ryder had set upon her. Underneath Janet never forgot Gregory, but her close attention to her surface occupations, which had nothing to do with him, had a greater curative value than she dreamed.

She was helped, too, by Charters' opposition to what she was doing. He admitted that her new friends were clever and charming, but he objected that all their intellect went to self-cultivation, when it was not dissipated in amusements. Janet agreed that the technique of the leisure class demanded that hard work should be put on accomplishments, and much energy should be spent on going to concerts and theaters, and listening to choice lectures and inspecting artists with unique specialties, partly because it was all interesting and partly merely to keep up with what was going on. But aside from the necessity she felt of not agreeing with Charters, Janet preferred Grace's friends to any others she had ever known. They suited with her traditions; they were acknowledged as among the best in America. They were people with charm and finish; they had been rich long enough to take naturally leisure and all the fruits of leisure, such as an impregnable self-respect. They were not

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forced to be driven by vulgar motives, and they were not awed by anything. To see in their situation evidences of social selection, to believe that they were people of natural superiority, and then to know that they liked her—all this helped Janet slowly on her way from the self-shame and despair that were poisoning the springs of her life.

She exchanged no words with Gregory, though she was in the same houses with him several times during the weeks that passed while she was doing her meager best to shine in Grace's world; but Ellen Guyon had called upon her, had really sought her out. Janet wondered why; was it to discover what there had been between herself and Gregory? Or did she know or guess what there had been, and was she merely cruelly anxious to emphasize her own success? Wilson Janet saw occasionally, nearly always accompanied by Sallie, whom Grace had christened "the little person." On two or three occasions Wilson had been near when Janet had turned blindly from the unbearable spectacle of Gregory and his fiancée, and it seemed to her that he had instinctively put himself forward as a shield. The little person, gazing eager-eyed upon the territory she meant to conquer, saw nothing of this.

It seemed to Janet during this time that people had a way of glancing in and out of her consciousness, meaning something for a moment and then disappearing. Blair had done so, lightly; Charters had almost ceased to have any meaning. Wilson seemed sometimes an actual emphatic presence, and again only a shadow. But toward the end of the year an incident occurred which so aroused her sympathy for him that he began to count to her very definitely as an entity.

It started with an early afternoon call from Sallie Keyes. The little person always entered Grace Ryder's house with a curiously possessive air, which said that she considered herself quite capable of presiding over such a place, and that she meant to have one some day—only

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one just a little more choice. Janet found her looking with a mixture of defiance and incredulity at one of Grace's sixteenth-century rugs.

"I read a piece in a paper about this the other day," she said, touching it carelessly with the toe of her neat little boot. "But don't you reckon, Janet, that it's an imitation? It doesn't seem as if carpet could last that long."

Janet laughed.

"Come along to my diggings," she said. "There isn't so much to look at there, and I can have you all to myself without sharing you with an antique rug."

As they went up-stairs Sallie's feet lagged. Janet looked at her once or twice solicitously. She noticed that there were bluish shadows under Sallie's lively eyes and that her cheeks seemed hollow.

"You don't look any too well, Sallie," she said, when she had settled her friend on a sofa.

"I shouldn't wonder," sighed Sallie. "I never do feel very well; but, of course, I cain't tell Dick, for a man never likes to have a sick woman groanin' around. But I reckon what ails me most is that I cain't have my own way."

Janet tried to take this remark lightly. She felt a sudden distaste for hearing any intimate confidences from Sallie.

"You'll do very well, Sallie," she said, easily. "You've always had your own way."

Sallie leaned back on the sofa pillows and swung her feet complacently.

"Yes, men always did give me my own way," she agreed. Then she added, petulantly: "But they weren't just on the point of being ma'ied to me. I don't know that women ever gave me my own way. Yo' cousin, Mrs. Ryder, won't."

Janet did not care to discuss Grace, but that was better than listening to a complaint about Wilson.

"I think Grace has been very nice to you," she murmured, "as nice as she has time to be."

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"A ma'ied woman always has more time for a nice bachelor than she has for that nice bachelor's nice fiancée," remarked Sallie.

"But all Mr. Wilson's friends will entertain you," Janet pointed out.

"Yes, and I'm afraid it will stop there, especially if Dick carries out his ideas. I have found out, anyhow, that when you ma'y a man in the no'th you don't ma'y his friends, unless they want you to."

"I've come to believe," reflected Janet, "that Chicago is a very independent place. The individual's position or money counts to a certain extent, but that's more or less mechanical. The individual's own achievement of personality or talent or clothes, or anything you like, is what counts in the long run. When it comes to liking you, these friends of Grace or of Mr. Wilson will like you for yourself, or else they won't like you at all."

Sallie looked at Janet with sudden attention. She had always felt superior to her, believing that men did not care for Janet, and assuming that popularity with men was any woman's road to success. But she was beginning to realize that the inner shrine of success which she craved was guarded by women, and that unless they gave her access to it all her triumphs over men would be specious. As she looked at Janet she recognized that there was something about her friend, some indescribable flavor, which convinced other women that she had a right to enter the sacred places.

"You cert'n'y have changed, Janet," she said. "I suppose you have got what you want."

Janet laughed shortly.

"Not in the least," she said. "One only gets what one wants when one stops wanting anything."

"I can't understand Dick," Sallie went on, querulously; and Janet saw that the complaint was coming, full tilt, and that she would not be able to stop it. "I don't see why he cain't settle down like other men of his age."

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"He's going to marry you; I should call that settling down," Janet remarked.

"It's his infatuation for the laborin' classes," said Sallie, fiercely. Sallie had no patience with her humble brethren, their demands and their strikes, their strenuous and often blundering struggles toward clear issues of class-consciousness. Sallie wanted to be let alone. She would scarcely have been aware of a war on the outskirts of the city unless it touched her comfort, and still less was she affected by the greatest battle of the ages, forever going on.

"When he first used to talk about it, up in Wisconsin, you know," Sallie went on, "I didn't pay any attention. I reckoned it was just a fad. I thought it would give him somethin' to get excited about, and be good for his blood. It didn't seem to me it would make any more difference in his real livin' than arts and crafts work or auction bridge. Yo' friend, Miss Ada Sargent, talks a lot about po' people, but I notice her material prosperity goes on just the same."

Janet sat with downcast eyes. In spite of herself she was deeply interested in what Sallie was saying. Suddenly Sallie broke into tears. Janet passed her hand softly over her friend's hair and murmured soothing inarticulate words. It was really Wilson she was thinking of, with pity and admiration. She felt impatient that Sallie could not honestly lend herself to the noble future Wilson had charted for her. Janet was too much of an idealist to foresee the high physical price that had to be paid; but the little person was practical; she foresaw it all, from unpleasant smells to calcimined walls, from sooty air to incompetent service.

Janet flamed to the task of aiding in making Sallie a fit helpmate to Wilson. Tactfully she made the most of what would seem to Sallie the hopeful features in the situation, and after a time the little person dried her eyes, drew two or three long sighs, and replied:

"Yes; and then I've thought maybe it's wiser to give

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him his haid; maybe he'll get over the fad sooner and live where I want to."

Janet smiled, but inwardly she shook her head. Perhaps she realized Wilson better in some ways than the little person did. She did not believe he would change. Other reformers or their wives could have told her that as soon as the Wilsons began to rear their babies they would compromise with his principles to the extent of moving to a suburb where, in pure air, their little ones would have a better chance of surviving than the native-born gutter babies.

"One reason I got here early," Sallie said, "was because I want you to come with us to the West Side this afternoon and see the flat Dick's furnished. I made him do it all himself; I couldn't bear to."

She looked into Janet's amazed eyes and laughed shortly.

"Oh, honey-bug, of co'se I didn't let him know the way I felt about it! I just said I was dreadfully tired gettin' my clothes ready, and that his taste was perfect."

Janet laughed.

"If you're such a good little actress as all that, Sallie," she said, "your future ought to run smoothly enough."

"Dick ought to be here pretty soon," Sallie said. "I told him a little after four. I felt as if it would be easier to look at the place for the first time if I had you to he'p me out, and say things I've not got the courage to believe."

"Oh, you wouldn't want me to go with you the first time!" cried Janet.

Sallie uttered a little hard laugh.

"Oh, I know what you're thinkin', you romantic thing," she said. "You think Dick and I ought to walk hand in hand all over the place, whisperin' how we'll sit here when we're ma'ied, and look at each other across the breakfast-table there, and how it will all be one smilin' holiday. Well, I cain't get up any sentiment about a

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place where I have to live side by side with old garlic-eatin' laborin' classes."

"Leaving my feelings out of the matter," said Janet, a trifle coldly, "Mr. Wilson—"

"Dick's delighted," interrupted Sallie. "He seems to care a heap for yo' society, and it ain't all because you and I are old friends."

"I am glad he likes me," Janet said, simply; "and, of course, if you want me to go with you I shall."

Soon afterward Wilson was announced, and the three set out for the Harrowgate Apartments. In after days, when the West Side had worked itself thoroughly into Janet's blood, she wondered that she could have lived in Chicago more than four years without ever having seen it. The vividness of her first vision became a commonplace before long, and yet in the beginning it gave her sleepless nights. After they had reached the shopping district they took a westward-going street-car. It was a shabby, dirty car, and it was soon full of shabby people, quite as clean, Wilson told Sallie, as they could be, considering their circumstances. Slowly the car became packed until the air was stifling, and it seemed that surely no other human being could be fitted in. And still the conductor shouted to people to move up forward, and on occasions he pushed them on. And never did he show them the least consideration or politeness.

"Rather different from yo' cousin's chauffeur," Sallie commented.

After half an hour's travel they dismounted on Halsted Street—that great vein of the world where the epic of America passes. It was noisy and disheveled and dirty; ramshackle cars pounded over the tracks, waste-paper and refuse blew in eddies on the pavement or rested temporarily in inconvenient places. The very sunlight sifted down dimmed and somehow blighted. All up and down the streets, in little shops and behind them, in tenements and cellars, dwelt the people of the forty nations who had

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come to learn to be Americans. The tenements and shop fronts, so sordid and dull, were misrepresentative of the flaming ambitions which inspired most of them.

To Janet, fresh from Grace's melodious household, the people she saw were strangely concrete, too strongly marked, too much in evidence. Here were no fine manners, no delicate indirection. Men and women passed her, brushing her out of their way, or, if they were not in a hurry, staring unrestrainedly at her. There were women in the costumes of their own country—shawled and withered, with no attempt at adornment. There were young girls whose clothes aped in cheap materials the prevailing mode, always with an added note of exaggeration. And their faces wore a look she had never seen on the faces of young girls in her own world—a shrewd, hard, appraising look, as if their every move must mean a struggle with some one for an advantage.

"It seems too close to the bare bones of things, all this," Janet said to Wilson, as they entered a side street which led to the Harrowgate Apartments.

"I know how you feel," he answered, "almost as if you were looking at people without any clothes on. It's all because they have to snatch for everything they get. Cheer up; you'll like the model tenement."

The model tenement had been built to encourage working people to strive toward a higher standard of living. Twenty-four suites of four or five rooms and a bath were offered at a rental of fifteen or sixteen dollars a month. While they were meant for working people, almost half of them were occupied by the groups of Wilson's friends—reformers and writers and painters and one or two newspaper men. Most of them felt it unnecessary to offer an excuse for their choice of residence. They were there because they wanted to be there, and they were together because they wanted to be together. When they grew tired they went away, and very often they came back. Some of them liked to live among the poor because, by

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a curious logic, they were convinced that this absolved them from any duty to society; others felt that here they were less under the lorgnette of society. Some of them deplored the fact that they were perhaps keeping away laborers and their families who might be lifted to spiritual heights by the use of a bath-tub; others argued that the terms of friendliness on which they lived with such working neighbors as would respond to their advances made up for whatever deprivation they might be costing any one; still others did not argue about it at all, not even quoting the law of the survival of the fittest. The artists, the writers, interested in the immediate expression of life could find here, unashamed, the types which go cloaked in a more complex environment; the whole procession walked openly before their eyes. A few of the residents really cared deeply for the little hindered lives that shuffled past, duplicating the motions of their own larger lives.

The three entered the Harrowgate Apartments, which, despite their size and comfortable appearance, had nevertheless borrowed something of the air of the mean buildings surrounding. The broad staircase they ascended to reach the second floor on which Wilson's flat was situated was not cheerful, despite high-colored woodwork. Janet noticed with a smile that Sallie's nostrils were distended, but no evil odor met them.

Wilson opened the door of the flat and then looked tenderly at Sallie. The little person smiled back brightly, and, gripping Janet's hand, prepared to endure. But so far as the furnishings went, the five-room house was quite as charming as if it had belonged to the North Side. Wilson had determined that Sallie's more personal environment should be all that she could desire, and he had chosen beautiful mahogany, soft, rich rugs, splendid embroideries, and good copies of pictures he knew that she liked.

The little person exclaimed and admired, and Janet,

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believing in the expressions of pleasure, wished she had not come, that the two might have spent a happy, intimate hour alone. When they were in the living-room she slipped into the kitchen and looked out of the window at a sordid, littered back yard, where a number of dirty children were at play among the refuse. Janet felt alien enough to it all, but she reflected that if, when Gregory had loved her, he had suggested living in such surroundings she would have gone with him as inevitably as she would have gone to the altar.

Sallie came into the kitchen and stood by her side, looking out with compressed lips.

"It's beautiful inside, isn't it?" said Janet, warmly.

Sallie's face took on a hard, nasty look.

"When I see what Dick's taste really is," she said, in a shrewish voice, "I can hardly bear it all. I'll come here if I have to—but I won't stay long. A ma'ied woman has a hold on a man that a girl cain't have. Anyway, once a man's ma'ied, he's ma'ied. It will be mighty odd if I can't find some way of enjoyin' my life like I have the right to."

There was no prettiness in her piquant face. It was as if an ugly mask had fallen over it. Janet looked at her in dismay and some disdain. Then Wilson came in, and the little person smiled at him. Janet turned back abruptly and looked out of the window. But what she saw was herself and Wilson the day they had watched the children at play, and he had told her some of his ideals. For the first time since she had definitely lost Gregory's love Janet forgot all about herself. She was carried away by a keen sympathy for Wilson, filled with a wish that he could be sheltered from the disappointment she feared Sallie would prove, fired by a zeal to stand ready to help him if ever her opportunity came.

XVII

WILSON'S FATHER

IT may be that Janet's new sympathy for Wilson might have waned in a short time, and that she might have retrograded into her perfect self-absorption, had not another occurrence, vital to him, deepened and intensified that sympathy. She learned of it the following day from Ryder during dinner. Ryder, as always, passed the first course before he was able to listen to anybody or to talk. His large, full eyes were fixed considerably on his food. It had to be very perfect food, since its function was to satisfy a man of power, a man with full ability to pay. Every one in the dining-room recognized the importance of the mission of that food, seeing it exactly as Ryder did, most of all the man behind his chair who served him. The butler's face never showed what he might be feeling until after he had left the dining-room. While he was in the room it mattered nothing to him that half across the world hating nations were slaying each other, that half across the city men of his own class were already forming in the long bread-line which was to be satisfied at midnight. Every fiber of him was absorbed in feeding the man of privilege.

"Have you looked at any of the afternoon papers, my dear?" Ryder finally asked his wife.

"No, Harrison. What page is it on?"

Grace's tone to her husband was never mocking. It was always gentle, sometimes a little wistful, and without analyzing it Ryder liked it immensely. There was something in it which reminded him that he was a Person

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of Privilege; his wife was a Person of Privilege, too. But it was not his money that won that tone from her. She had money of her own, and children, and interests; but that tone was a constant gratifying assurance that all she was and did were Harrison Ryder's.

"It's about old Christian Wilson. Some of us were right, after all."

Ryder spoke with a sense of patronage, and with the air of a man who had been saying, "I told you so," with considerable pleasure.

"When old Mr. Wilson failed, about eight years ago," Grace explained to Janet, "every one thought he'd sell his seat on the Board of Trade. He could have invested the money, and had enough to exist on, but he wouldn't. How was it, Harrison, that he managed to hold it?"

"Some old friend practically let him have about forty thousand dollars, with the seat for security," Ryder said. "All his people, including his sons, were against it, but the old man hung on. He just about broke even, until last year, when he did a couple of successful pieces of sky-rocketing in the way of pyramiding. That was what made me see that the old man hadn't lost his power, that maybe he can turn the trick yet. It looks as if I'm right."

"But what is it?" queried Ada, leaning across the table toward Ryder, her face lighted as it always was when she talked to men, her eyes assuring Ryder that, no matter how much she was opposed to his ruthless business attitude, she must always admire him as a man of power. Ryder looked back at her, losing for a moment the thread of what he was saying.

"Yes, what is it?" repeated Grace, her tone not quite so soft as it had been.

Ryder assumed that it would be useless to talk to women of margins and points, and he said, with the slightly patronizing air of one who translates for the unelect:

"Briefly, the old fellow got a tip that some one was pushing up wheat—and at this season of the year, too.

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He guessed who the strong powers were and what their plan of operation was, and then pyramided. He's a grand old lion. I went to him—you know, Grace, he was best man at my father's wedding, and he was the first person that ever took me to a zoological garden—I went to him, and I said to him, 'Uncle Chris, if a hundred thousand would be any use to you, take it and buck the tiger.' He looked at me sharply—those blue eyes of his are keen—and he said: 'I'll take it, Harrie'—he always calls me 'Harrie'—'if you'll not come bothering me about it till I lose it or give it back to you fivefold.' I said, 'I'll forget it, Uncle Chris,' and he said, 'Send it over by a boy.' Mind you, he's living in one room, somewhere, but he hasn't forgotten the old days, and, by George! I don't believe he means to die till he's made good again."

Ryder's words affected them all. They were appealed to by the gallant last struggle of this old warrior of the street, holding on against opposition, and in defeat, trying to win back what he had lost, proud to the end. Curiously, what made it all seem more real was the fact that this old man had once led Ryder by the hand to show him the wonders of the world, and called him "Harrie." Janet thrilled with admiration for Wilson's splendid father, but during Ryder's remarks she had been feeling the old man only as the background for his strong son.

"There's nothing like the spirit of those old pioneers that are left to us," Ryder went on, with as much enthusiasm as he ever showed. "Dick's got all the old man's grit and power, too, but he can't put his heart in his work. He's born with the brains right enough, but so far as disposition goes he ought to be one of those writer chaps that live by describing what they call industrial horrors."

Ryder spoke with the tolerant contempt most men of his sort secretly feel for people who give their lives to the fine arts and get from them at the best a fortune that can only be moderate. Some one had told Ryder that the best-paid writer in the country had not so far rolled up

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a million dollars; so Ryder knew that the business side of the writing game had very definite limits. For himself he had not thought in units of less than a million since he had really gone with business.

Janet felt a touch of resentment. Ryder should have admired a man who could resist his influence as imperturbably as Richard Wilson did. Somehow, as she thought of Wilson, he took an immovable position in her consciousness. She felt definitely and forever that subtle bond of intimacy which had been established between them on that October afternoon when they had watched the children at play, and when Wilson had felt the little ones to be a symbol of the disharmonic world in which he was playing an uncongenial part.

"Yesterday marked an advance," she said, when she was alone; "but to-night is irrevocable. Richard Wilson is real. I can build from him."

The next day saw the end of old Christian Wilson's tale of triumphs and defeats. Harrison Ryder came home early in an unwonted mood of response and reminiscence. It was not often that he was strongly moved. Not that he had at all the ideal of the Old World leisure classes that the expression of emotion is not only bad form, but a loosening of self-respect, a sign to the spectator that one's superiority is not transcendent. Harrison Ryder unconsciously assumed that just because he was superior he could do precisely as he pleased. There was, however, so little real struggle in his life, such a certainty that he could have whatever he wanted, that he had not had occasion to develop much sense of the dramatic.

His mood required an audience; he had found one at his club and thus taken off the first edge of his feeling; but what he had to say grew more important to him with the telling. Therefore, he went where he was surest of the exact attention he required—home. In spite of the guarded and beautiful silence of the Ryder house, it was like most middle-class houses—a vibration in it was

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struck when the master returned. Ryder set it in motion when he crossed his threshold; the man at the door who received his coat and hat sent the waves sweeping upstairs.

"I believe I hear Harrison," Grace said to Ada, to whom she was dictating letters in an unexpected half-hour of leisure. She went to the door of her sitting-room and opened it. "It is Harrison; we sha'n't work any longer, Ada," she added, over her shoulder.

Ada began to gather up her papers, while Grace waited in the doorway for her husband.

"You're early, dear," she called. "The children will be so glad; I was going to them presently."

This domestic welcome quite accorded with Ryder's mood. He kissed his wife and entered the room. There his eye, lighting upon Ada, lost its quiet marital glance and kindled.

"I'm just going," Ada said. "Don't ever say that women don't work hard. Grace and I have been at it eight hours to-day."

Grace made no remark, but Ryder said:

"Don't go; we might have some tea here, Grace, if you haven't had it. I shouldn't mind a cup myself. I've had a good stiff day. Is Janet home?"

Ada rang, and Ryder sat down in the great chair always waiting for him and not too often occupied.

"I'll fetch Janet," Ada said. "It 'll be quite a party with the master of the house here."

"Are you tired, dear?" Grace asked, when Ada had gone. "You don't look it; but, then, you never do."

Her voice had the gentle note it always had for him. The delicate admiration she was so well able to convey reached Ryder; he knew that she meant that he could do three men's work and never show it, and that she somehow related his physical endurance with business strength.

"I'm not tired, but I have had a stiff day," said Ryder, who rather insisted on his points.

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Grace, who knew him as thoroughly as any clever woman who has studied a man for sixteen years always knows him, allowing for the distorted vision a deep affection on her part may cause, was aware that her husband was charged with something he wanted to say, but that he was saving it for a wider circle.

Janet and Ada came in, Janet fresh from a walk with the children in the chill air. The tea was brought, and Grace dispensed it, looking her best as she did so. Ryder was soothed by the charm of the atmosphere the three women created for him.

"Yes, I've had a stiff day," he repeated, as he put down his cup.

He was the personification of comfort as he settled his thick body in the thick chair, his back to the door, his heavy, full eyes gazing complacently at the tea-table, at his wife behind it, and at the other two women, all vicariously representing him. Their presence there depended entirely on Harrison Ryder. No wonder they were presenting him with their complete attention.

"I scarcely saw the inside of my office," he said. "I've been in my broker's office for hours."

"Oh, is it something about old Mr. Wilson?" cried Janet.

An interruption was not in Ryder's program; therefore he ignored it, and thereafter included only his wife and Ada in his glances.

"I looked in on the Board of Trade," he said, "and I've never seen such a crowd. The gallery was packed, and the floor was a bedlam. I've been on Wall Street quite a bit, but I've never seen more excitement there. People tell you how men bite their nails and twist their lips and go through all sorts of funny contortions when they're watching the ticker. Well, they do, but I don't think I ever before saw a man bite his lips till the blood streamed down his chin. The excitement was just like an electric shock. A man could feel it simply sitting in a broker's office watching the ticker."

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Ryder's account was far more alive to himself than it was to his listeners. Charters had once described to Janet the scene about the wheat pit on the Board of Trade on a day when the market was in danger of breaking. He had made her see the floormen buying and selling, the pages running in and out with written orders to buy and sell, the wild shouting and leaping, the tense faces and gleaming eyes. He had said that these men in the pit were the cat's-paws of the brokers, saving their masters' nerves from stress and storm, and wearing out their own. But he had had to admit that these hirelings loved the intentness and concentration of their work, and enjoyed the goodfellowship that subsisted among themselves; for in order to throw business one to another they had to be on as good terms as merchant and salesman in that other world of buying and selling.

"By George!" Ryder went on, "he's a wonderful old lion, that old Christian Wilson! I always have believed in him. And to-day, by George, he proved I was right. Wheat's been going up, point by point, for three days, and this morning people were crazy, not knowing whether to let go or to hold on. The old chap went on the Board of Trade himself. We were sitting in the broker's office together, and out he went. I was afraid he'd be mobbed, for people wondered if he had inside information or if he was crazy. Not a man got his attention. I think he enjoyed that—old Uncle Chris, with his head up, and his white hair showing underneath his hat, and me walking along behind him, just the same as I used to when he'd say, 'Harrie, don't you know that camel by heart? Come on, now, and take a look at the zebra.'"

Ryder smiled reminiscently. It was clear that he was enjoying his unwonted humility, felt the picturesqueness of being for a brief time overshadowed by old Christian Wilson, whose son he employed.

"When we were back in the broker's office," continued Ryder, "I made a little calculation, and I saw that he

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must be ahead three or four hundred thousand dollars, and I knew I stood to win on my money—if he sold out. So then, Grace,” he added, addressing unconsciously the listener whose attention was most absorbed and sympathetic, “then I said to him, ‘Would two hundred thousand more do you any good, Uncle Christian?’ ‘Let me have it,’ he said, with never a thank-you. By Jove, Grace, at that moment I wouldn’t have cared if the plucky old chap had lost me half a million. He never turned a hair till half past eleven, and then he gave the order to sell. At twelve o’clock he must have made a killing of close to two millions.”

The listeners drew a long breath and leaned back in their chairs, but Ryder was still bending forward in his, and there was an expression in his face that told them that the end of his story was not yet.

“It’s very dramatic,” Ryder said. “I suppose it’s all happened before, but not to any one I’d known all my life. It isn’t often that an old fellow like that hangs on for ten years and won’t be broken, won’t fail. Just when I was thinking to myself that the old man ought to retire with what he’d got, and go to California and sit on porches for the rest of his life, he turned to me and he said, ‘Well, Harrie, let’s have a little lunch, eh?’ I expected him to say something about having beaten them after all, but he just talked about lunch. ‘It seems to me I forgot about breakfast,’ he said, ‘and I could eat all around the clock.’ We were just walking out together when he clutched my arm. I guessed then it was his heart. We carried him to a taxi and drove to the nearest hospital. Don’t know how serious it is. I haven’t telephoned since. Dramatic finish, poor old fellow, whether he lives or dies.”

“You sent Dick to him, of course?” Grace said.

“Yes; I had to see a horde of reporters. It’s a front-page story.”

Ryder leaned back with the consciousness of one who has told a tale well, while the women made little murmurs

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of exclamation and comment, sympathizing with both father and son. Suddenly Ryder felt a strange lassitude. He did not know what the matter with him was, but he had lost sight of the dramatic side of the story he had told, had forgotten his own part in it, and was feeling the pathos of the life of the old man who had been his father's friend, and who had spent ten hard years with nothing to show for it at the end except three brief days of fighting and an attack of heart-failure. The old man would die, and some day Ryder himself would die. He wanted to see something young and untouched, something that would suggest permanence.

"I think I'll go to the nursery," he said, wistfully, to his wife.

They went together, and presently Ryder was telling his children stories of how he used to go to the zoological garden when he was a little boy. Old Christian Wilson receded to the back of his mind; he had worn out his power of response to the dramatic story, and that night he dined with more than ordinary gusto. But Janet, that harp of emotion, was vibrating to what she knew must be Richard Wilson's grief, almost as if it were her own.

XVIII

AN APPROACH

THE next morning Janet did not wake with her usual dreary feeling: "What is this dreadful thing that has happened to me?" Her thought was: "This is a hard day for Richard Wilson."

After breakfast she went restlessly [into the little writing-room where Ada transacted the mechanical details of Grace's social business and wrote the letters which dealt with the movements and causes which she had made her own. It was a plain little place, the walls a sober, middle-aged brown, faced half-way up on all sides by bookshelves. These shelves contained nothing frivolous; solid volumes and pamphlets were phalanxed there; a mute and not necessarily effective testimonial of the many, many minds which had found something wrong with society, and had expounded and protested and offered means of re-creation, all in a more or less measured tolerant way, as if readers had to be treated tactfully lest they be reminded that they were part of society, and therefore in fault. It was as if the passion to help the helpless must be disguised lest timorous readers should think the intention was to get something from them. The hopeful sign was that the minds went on thinking, and, when it was possible, acting, and the volumes went on increasing, a symbol, perhaps, that some day new human ramparts would be built up for the world.

But if the room was for the most part plain, as if Ada had told herself that she was putting aside personal or youthful things, yet youth and self did speak. A bit of

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gay Chinese embroidery protested against the square businesslike writing-table. Two or three paintings of Italian scenes, blazing with light and color, flaunted their warmth above the somber bookcases. Gay cushions built up a shelter on the sofa, and a bright fire was burning.

Janet stood by the desk and looked down on Ada. She was thinking of Wilson, but she spoke as if she were thinking of herself.

"You work there in front of your pigeonholes," she said, moodily, "as if you thought they were a road to happiness. They are like everything else in the world—only a pretense."

Though Ada would not have cared to put her opinion into words, she considered Janet utterly self-absorbed and without a shadow of a horizon. It was almost inconceivable to Ada that Janet could live in the state of Illinois and not care who the governor was; that she might know the politics of the mayor, but not know what he really stood for; that she could hear the names of half a dozen men in office and get no meaning from them. There was no important political name that did not suggest to Ada a whole hinterland of facts and ideas. One man's name meant a miserable betrayal of the laboring people who had trusted him; it meant cynicism on the part of scores of young men who had voted for him, and were now sneering at themselves for believing that a man would do anything for the people once he really had power. Another name meant long, fruitless effort, and a career blasted by its white honesty, and plastered with defamation by men who would have suffered if honesty had succeeded. Ada saw all people, men and women, and all movements as pawns working for or against justice, when powers, other than themselves, moved them about on the chess-board of the world. She believed that a new feeling for humanity, a tenderness for the rights of the weak, was rising in America, and she believed, too, that women were the torch-bearers in the movement.

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They were going to broaden their housekeeping, as they put it, from their homes to the cities and to the world. They were going to be mothers not only to those born of them, but to all who needed help. Ada would passionately have made a recruit of any one she could, above all of this girl whom she lived beside and for whom she had a deep affection. She was afraid that Janet's mind would be sealed for some time to come because she could see only her own grief, her own problem. Yet when she looked at Janet's face, soft and sad in the firelight, her judgment grew gentle.

"You and I," said Ada, sadly, "were born with too much feeling. The one thing that would have saved us, and which may save us yet—you, anyway—is to marry. An emotional woman with her husband and children has the normal vent. But think of the millions of us who never win them, and the price we have to pay for the lack. The happily married—and the unhappily married, for that matter—don't realize what a stark, unsatisfying world that of the spinster is. Our only salvation is to translate the energy that should go to husband and children into some kind of work."

"Jimmy Charters' doctrine," sighed Janet.

"He advises work for the man's reason—to express yourself by doing something that's *you*. I advise it for the woman's reason—to help you stifle all the personal wants that aren't satisfied."

"Oh, I suppose one comes to it," said Janet, wearily.

"One shouldn't be driven to it," Ada said. "One should make an effort of will. It ought to be work, too, that would help other women, and one ought to go to it in a high, creative way. I tell you, Janet, my life has taught me a passionate sex-loyalty. You haven't begun to think of women as a sex as yet; you've thought of nothing but yourself and your love, and your self-centeredness ought to be punished by law! It would be easier for you if you learned to think of yourself merely as a representative of

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a great mass of women who have dared to use only one or two of their many voices, but who are now beginning to speak more and more clearly and insistently."

Janet had always listened politely when Ada spoke of "the cause"; but it had had for her no essential reality. On this morning for the first time something in Ada's passion touched and even inspired her.

"And yet," she objected, "a cause is satisfying only when it is a background to husband and children."

"You may have noticed," replied Ada, "that the women who do most for a cause are precisely those who have neither husband nor children. Develop a passion for women, Janet, and you'll find you've made a paying investment."

"I don't know what I want," sighed Janet.

Irrelevantly she wondered if Sallie were with Wilson—gay little Sallie, who hated sickbeds and any sign of trouble.

"Oh, I can't stay in the house," she said, impatiently, "not even for the purpose of hindering your work, Ada. I think I'll walk down-town and do some shopping."

When she was half-way down-town she heard rapid footsteps. Turning her head, she saw Blair. They had not met since their encounter in the park, several weeks previously, but Blair greeted her as if he had been with her the day before, falling into step beside her.

"I've just come from Dick Wilson's," he said. "The old man is very low; only saw Dick a minute. It's hard lines. Well, Miss Bellamy," he added, with gloomy whimsicality, "whatever changes we may make in society, we'll never be able to do away with death."

He talked of Wilson until they reached the shopping center, scarcely waiting for her replies.

"Good-by," he said. "I've a notion we'll meet again. You're too good to be lost in Philistia."

She left him, smiling at his naïveté. After an hour or two of desultory shopping she turned homeward. Almost

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at the spot where she had met Blair she saw Wilson approaching her. She noticed that he was walking more quickly than usual and was holding his body with unaccustomed stiffness. As he came near she saw that his face was tense and his eyes glazed and set.

Involuntarily she put out her hand to stop him.

"Mr. Wilson," she said.

He halted abruptly and looked at her fixedly, as if it were an effort to bring his mind to her.

"Were you coming to see us?" she asked.

"No," he said, dully; "my father died a little while ago."

"Let us walk," Janet said, pitifully. "It will do you good."

She remembered how, when Gregory had first failed her, she had tried to deaden the energy of her grief by walking. She matched her pace to Wilson's, and they walked northward, the wind behind them.

"Sallie is away, you know," he said, as if answering some unspoken question as to why he had not gone to the one person who had the best right to help him pass his bad hours. "She went up to Wisconsin to see about re-renting her farm and furniture."

Janet had thought a good deal the night before about Sallie in relation to Wilson. She had wondered what the effect of a fortune would be on Wilson. Sallie's reaction she could guess; the little person would have dreams of gowns, a car, and a position in Grace's world. She would assume that the plan of living in the Harrowgate apartment among the "dreadful laborin' people" would be given up. A theory about what you should do with a lot of money when you didn't have it was a very different thing from your practice when the money was actually in your hands. So the little person's philosophy would run.

And, indeed, Janet had reflected, Wilson had never really been tempted with any large sum of money. As Ryder's employee he had felt a disinclination to try for

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such prizes as were within his reach, a distaste for the whole game of business. But now that he was his own man, now that he had a certain amount of power without any reaching for it, would he be constant to his ideals? Now that he could again belong on equal terms to the world that once claimed him, would not his views change? She saw again the children whom they had watched at play a few weeks before, the little white-clad ruler babies and the gutter babies. Would Wilson forget the gutter babies?

But this morning, as she walked rapidly by his side, she had no thought of what he might do with his money. She understood that he was suffering, and she wanted to help him. She did not know how a man would bear such an immediate grief, but Wilson soon showed her that it was not by talking of it directly. He mentioned very briefly his father's death and the arrangements he had made for the funeral.

"There is no one to consult but myself," he said. "I haven't a close relative in the world." He spoke quite impersonally, and she wondered if his way of steeling himself against a hard fact was to survey in the open. She was about to remind him gently that he had Sallie, but then she felt that he did not want to be comforted with words.

"I stood at the telephone all yesterday afternoon and evening," he said. "My father was unconscious, and did not need me. Until voice after voice called up asking for him I did not realize what he stood for here in Chicago. We're so young here, after all; a man who goes back beyond the Chicago fire means history, Miss Bellamy."

He spoke in a jerky, vibrant voice, and one that betrayed far more feeling than he guessed. He repeated to her old stories his father had told him of what Chicago had looked like before the fire, and of how cheaply land could be bought—sites that were worth almost any money now. He made her see the great city as a village,

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where people had their dinner in the middle of the day, and where, after the evening meal, people drove up and down the main streets in family carriages. As they passed a block of the splendid Lake Shore Drive houses he mentioned that the land they stood on had once been a vacant lot where the old-fashioned circuses used to pitch their tents. He showed her a house on whose lawn he remembered seeing a cow milked in the evenings.

"Father was part of it all," he said. "He lost all he had in the fire, and he went to my mother, to whom he was engaged at the time, and whose father had not lost anything. He offered to release her, but Mother wouldn't take her freedom. He started all over with nothing, and she waited for him. People worked shoulder to shoulder in those days. There wasn't the division there is now between the rich babies and the poor babies."

A muscle twitched in Wilson's cheek. His words to Janet were a rather remote translation of what he was really feeling. He was prepared in theory, as we all are, for death. He had said to himself, as we all do, that it is the common lot. But he had not been prepared for the utter sense of loss this death had caused him. He had loved his father dearly, but there had been moments in the past ten years when he had wondered if an end to the pathetic struggle would not be merciful. The old man's work had seemed to be done, and yet he was still seeking for activity; he had lost his wife, one son, his fortune; he was old and sick and unhappy, conscious that his remaining son was not in sympathy with his gambling on the Board of Trade; he had not had much to live for.

Yet now that his father had gone, Wilson was feeling the denial we all make against death, the conviction that it had come too soon. With eyes that smarted he was seeing that still, white, old face as he had remembered it years ago, full of power and hope. He recalled the happy family life together, long, long before his mother

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and brother had died and his father had become a nervous old man, obsessed by the one idea of getting back what he had lost. He remembered his father's irrational pride in the name the college boys had given his son—"the sea-blue Injun." Wilson understood why women weep.

He stopped talking suddenly and looked at Janet wearily. She took up the thread where he had dropped it, and began to talk to him of the time when she had first met Sallie, and of their girlish adventures together. Without caring very much what she was saying he listened to her beautiful voice, helped by its sympathetic note. After a long time he looked at his watch.

"I must be getting back," he said. "There will be things to look after."

As they turned he added:

"You've been very good to me."

"I wish Sallie had been in Chicago," Janet said, softly.

"Oh no," he said, quickly; and then he added: "It would have distressed her too much."

He looked at Janet with a feeling of gratitude, and almost of affection. The hour had drawn them close together. Her emotions always reached out like a flame toward their object, and he was touched by her ardent sympathy. He was very far from understanding the real Janet. If he had known the history of her passionate, self-centered soul, he might, perhaps, have shrunk from her. It would have seemed to him incredible that she could have loved a man not worth it, or that, loving him, she should have been unable to give him up. Wilson's solution would have been that of Charters': the determination to turn that consuming energy outward into some work which would be useful and therefore satisfying.

For her part Janet did not entirely understand Wilson. She supposed that an unusual feeling for the unprivileged classes had stirred him. She still translated all the phases of significant life in terms of emotion. She did not realize that Wilson had a keen sense of justice, a gnawing con-

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science that forced him to break his lance in the lists of life for the relatively helpless. He had the wish to be of use, scientific, like a doctor's, and he had always been able to subordinate himself and his own desire to his conviction of what was fair and right.

Janet and Wilson thought that their increased intimacy of feeling meant an increased understanding.

"I have come to believe that you are not quite happy this year," Wilson said. "I'm sorry."

"I'm just paying my toll to life like every one else," Janet said, with rather a twisted smile. "Perhaps women pay more heavily than men do,"

Wilson looked at her with an eye that saw beyond her; for the moment she was no longer Janet Bellamy, but merely a type of a great legion of emotional girls with seeking eyes.

"If they have paid more heavily than men in the past," he said, "it has been because men had more resources than they had. But that is not the case to-day. It should be an inspiring thing to women to look at this great feminist movement which is going to build over so many futile natures, fill and enrich so many empty lives!"

Janet's mind had not been entirely a stony place for the seed Ada and Grace had cast upon it. Yet these more or less casual words of Wilson's stirred her as Ada's earnest efforts had not. Because she felt so close to Wilson his ideas swayed her. Doubtless Ada had had a deeper effect on Janet than either had supposed; yet now Janet felt as if Wilson were suggesting a new and fresh solution. There must be something to take hold of!

They clasped hands in a silent farewell. Janet entered the Ryder house, her face grave but hopeful. There must be something in life for her yet, she thought. With work, and with such friends as she had, surely she could rebuild that shattered temple of her self-esteem. But when she said "friends," she meant chiefly Richard Wilson.

XIX

THE FIRST VICTORY

IT was a few days after the death of Wilson's father. Janet and Sallie were sitting in Grace's huge ballroom amid twelve hundred other women whom Grace, always alert in estimating the progress of a movement, had called together in the interests of equal suffrage. Grace had remarked cynically that every one would come—people of her own world to see what it was all about; suffragists of the middle classes already convinced would be present to help make converts, while other middle-class women would come for the sake of seeing the inside of her house.

Janet, glancing at Sallie, was rather amused at the little person's air of vicarious bereavement. Sallie had a pursed expression upon her upper lip meant to be grave, but really a bit supercilious. She glanced about upon the fashionable part of the audience with the manner of one who was more than an equal, who could even, if she chose, be a leader.

"Honey," whispered Sallie, during a moment while one of the speakers was being applauded, "I cert'n'y do think yo' cousin might have done up this room in better taste. The walls are too much like a restaurant or a theater."

Janet repressed an impatient smile. She wondered if the day would come when Sallie would try to patronize Wilson. She suspected that the only fact which would restrain her would be Wilson's own firm resistance. Her face grew serious as she thought of him, battling with grief, worse than alone, just because of Sallie's far cry from any real understanding of him. And from thinking

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of him she began to muse on the sorry scheme of the world. She had wanted time to hurry by that it might cure her sorrow, but that hurrying time had brought sorrow to Wilson. Every day people were praying, "Oh, if to-morrow would but come and bring me my joy." Yet that same to-morrow was the harbinger of pain to others. Janet shook her head impatiently, giving up the riddle before her brain began to swim with that greatest and commonest mystery of the world.

She had paid rather close attention to the speakers. Because she was not for the moment the prey of her own disappointed emotions, because she had been so deeply moved with sympathy for Wilson, her heart was open on this afternoon for the distresses of others, even if these concerned food and shelter and work, rather than love.

"Practically eight million women working in this country," said one speaker; and at once Janet saw them—endless files of women in factory, shop and store, office and kitchen; she saw them underpaid and in insanitary surroundings, with no voice in the home, for they had no homes of their own, and with no voice in the world, for they had no vote. Janet was ready to take the first step at translating herself into something of value to other people. It was the woman's desire to be needed which had made her pour her love upon Gregory; she had made heavier demands than most love dares, but under her selfishness had always been the desire to give. She was capable of developing the wish to give with little or no return. She looked curiously at the speakers.

"While I've just been loving Mark," she thought, "all these women have been working for other women who have been wanting things as badly, perhaps, as I wanted them."

It was characteristic of Janet that she was not particularly impressed with the abstract arguments as to why it was woman's right to vote. She thought with her heart always, and she saw now not the civic work that could

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not be fairly done till women and men together managed it, but rather the ranks of the helpless, the women who never could marry, the children who had no one with the power to insist on their rights.

When the speeches were over she looked at the groups about her with a vague sense of sisterhood; they were all going to help each other. The majority of her sisters were quite unaware of her; some were anxious to get to their cars and go on to another sensation; others, more seriously interested, wanted to ask questions of the speakers. Janet stood aside listening to Sallie's talk until the great room had almost emptied itself. A knot of women still remained, calling acquaintances of Grace, who lingered secure in the sense of always being welcome guests, talking of their pleasant concerns which were not at all related to the rights of women. Among them was Ellen Guyon.

"There's that Guyon woman," said Sallie. "Honey, hush! that Gregory man cain't have had any sense of humor, or else he is mighty confidin', because why should he be trustin' me not to tell about his experimentin' in love?"

"I've heard you say that you can never tell about men," remarked Janet.

"I reckon I'll go," Sallie said. "No use waitin' any longer."

Janet laughed at the obvious meaning. She bade Sallie good-by, and then she glanced up to see Ellen Guyon looking at her. She suddenly found herself able to meet Ellen's eyes without a sense of self-depreciation and despair. Invariably she dramatized her emotions, and so far she had never seen Ellen without feeling the words Gregory must say to his sweetheart, without seeing Gregory, his eyes soft, the little quirking smile tender as he leaned toward the woman he loved.

Yet now it suddenly struck her that there must be a good many hours of the day when Gregory's eyes would

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have a steely light in them, when he would not be thinking of Ellen at all. She reflected that Gregory was a man who soon fell into a fixed habit of life, and who could not love deeply. He would take marriage as prosaically as he would take any other experience. She looked at Ellen, smiling a little; she was not afraid of her any more, and for the moment at least Ellen had no power to hurt her.

Ellen came forward, holding out her hand.

"Wasn't it interesting? What are you going to do now? Why don't you ever keep your promise of coming to see me? Do drive home with me now for tea."

"Thank you, I'd like to," said Janet, with a slight sense of exhilaration.

"How delightful!" said Ellen. "I've hoped you would."

Janet thought there was a faint note of surprise in Ellen's voice, and this amused her. It did her good to feel that she could at last meet Ellen without a maddening sense of inferiority because this other woman had won what she had tried to keep. Driving beside Ellen, she talked easily, and with a growing sense of being able to hold her own. When she entered the Guyon house it was not with the thought, "He has been here; it is here that he says to her those words that he used to say to me!" She was merely thinking that the façade of the house was extremely ugly.

Tea had its usual effect of producing an atmosphere of intimacy quite factitious in the case of these two, as they both knew. Each was waiting for the introduction of Gregory's name, though each knew that it would not be Janet who would speak it. At last Ellen glanced out of the windows.

"This is such a cozy hour, don't you think so?" she said. "I am sorry that the University is so far away. Mr. Gregory can't drop in to tea very often."

"Seven miles does make a difference, doesn't it?" said Janet, placidly.

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"There won't be seven miles between us after this spring; that's one comfort," Ellen said.

In spite of herself Janet's hand tightened upon the cup she was holding. She remembered the plans she and Mark had made for their wedding, which was to be in the spring. Then she said, slowly:

"Are you to be married in the spring?"

"Yes. I've bought—we've bought a house which will be vacated then, and Mr. Gregory thinks—he seems to wish to saddle himself with me as soon as possible."

"Of course," said Janet.

She put down the tea-cup and leaned back in her chair. What was it Ellen wanted? A dull ache crept into her heart. She felt as if she could not talk much longer about Gregory's marriage.

"I've been shopping a great deal for the house," Ellen said. "It is such fun to buy things."

Janet did not reply, and Ellen added, hastily:

"But it's a dreadful bore, too, and it wears me out frightfully."

Janet looked up. Was it possible that Ellen was feeling sorry for her? Rather than that she would have preferred in Ellen a sense of victory. She decided to offer an opening.

"Mr. Gregory likes to teach during the summer quarter, I remember," she said.

Ellen took the opening.

"You used to know him very well, didn't you?" she said, evenly.

"Oh, quite," said Janet, coolly.

The two looked at each other fully. It was Ellen's eyes which dropped first.

"He—he told me he had known you very well," Ellen said.

She glanced up, and suddenly her face grew wistful. Janet saw clearly what a plain face it was, how no art could disguise the touch of time upon it, and how there

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was no expression on it to tell of real mind, real experience. Yet the look upon it now touched her against her will.

"Every one gets married," Ellen said, suddenly; "but I sometimes wonder a woman is not afraid. What if she fails to make a man happy?"

Janet had the key at last. Ellen may have wanted very badly to get married, as Grace and Sallie had both said. But it was certain that she really loved the man whom she had chosen. She might be a lame duck who had had to go outside her own circle to find any mate at all; but she was like any other woman—capable of being hurt by that mate. Janet's reservation vanished, and she felt a sincere sympathy for Ellen. With the coming of that sympathy the pain at hearing Gregory's name disappeared. There came also a distinct sense of superiority. She told herself that she might still love Gregory, but that at least he had no longer the power to hurt her.

"Miss Guyon," Janet said, "we were good friends, Mr. Gregory and I, very close; but any little interest he had in me has gone forever."

Ellen lifted her head, and by her look Janet saw that Gregory had not told the woman he was going to marry about his previous engagement. He had reaped the advantage of the fact that there had never been any public announcement of his relation to Janet. Instinctively, Janet divined that what Ellen had feared was not an engagement that was dead, but some attachment that had been checked while it was still alive.

"Oh," thought Janet, "she is afraid; she wonders sometimes when she sees some one younger and better-looking if it was not her money after all."

"Yes—of course, I understand," muttered Ellen.

Janet rose.

"It's getting ever so late. No, don't send for a car. I'd really rather walk."

Ellen held out her hand.

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"It was so good of you to come," she said. "I'm going to take you to the door. I hope I shall see you soon again."

Her voice was rather stiff. Janet understood. Ellen was angry at having shown her heart too freely. She had relieved her mind, but at the expense of lowering her feeling of superiority over Janet. Inwardly Janet smiled. She was transferring to Ellen a little of the contempt she had so long felt for herself.

"You're a middle-class person," she was thinking, with a reversion to her father's standards. "And you have a second-rate soul. I don't believe you and I are going to trouble each other in the future."

XX

JANET RESURGENS

AS Janet and Ellen approached the door they saw a group of three, the Guyon butler, and two whom Janet recognized with a start of surprise—Blair and Sonya Riborsky.

"But you can ask your mistress if she will see this young woman, I suppose?" Blair was saying. "That's exactly why I came with her—so she'd not be turned away without a hearing."

"Dear me! What's this?" said Ellen, irritably; and Janet amusedly reflected that Ellen was bestowing on the new-comers some of the chagrin Janet had cost her.

Blair advanced easily. When he saw Janet he smiled, saying:

"Ah, Miss Bellamy; now I can be properly presented."

Janet made the introduction, and Ellen surveyed Blair with the interest she always felt in a good-looking man who was possible. Ellen had not been engaged quite long enough to have abandoned the last vestiges of the huntress instinct. To Sonya she vouchsafed the merest nod. Sonya could never under any circumstances be possible.

"Miss Riborsky wants to see you about a certain matter, Miss Guyon," Blair said. "She tried to see Mrs. Ryder yesterday, but was not admitted to the house. I made up my mind that her quest to you shouldn't be so fruitless—at least at the start."

Blair had a hypnotizing confidence about him. As long as Ellen looked at him her pose was pliable; but

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when she turned to Sonya she stiffened. She saw in Sonya some sort of petitioner who was going to bother her, whether she could grant the petition or not. Ellen did not mind playing Lady Bountiful; but she did not like being reminded of the ills of the world, and no one could look at Sonya without feeling the atmosphere of pathos, if not of tragedy, which she carried. Besides, Ellen's nerves were upset by the growing conviction that she had given Janet Bellamy the advantage over her, that she could never again see her without a curious feeling of loss.

Janet held out her hand in farewell.

"Wait a minute, do," said Ellen. "This young person will probably only detain me a moment."

Blair lifted his long eyebrows at Sonya with a "What did I tell you" expression. He leaned easily against the door, and turned his look on Ellen with a half-quizzical, half-bitter smile. He was going to watch a little comedy of power over dependence.

"What do you wish to see me about?" asked Ellen, crisply, of Sonya.

"It's about my little cousin in your factory—Levy, Schwartz and Guyon; and two other little girls, all eleven years old," began Sonya.

"But that can't be," said Ellen, in a superior tone; "their ages, I mean; the law says they must be fourteen before they can be employed."

"Sure, I know that's the law," Sonya said; "but, of course, they said they were fourteen to the boss, for they wanted jobs."

Ellen's look said:

"Then what have I to do with this? They have the right to work."

"But it isn't their ages," Sonya went on. "These little girls pull out basting-threads. My cousin, she is the quickest, and she makes two dollars and forty cents a week. The slow one, she makes only a dollar sixty.

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The boss keeps them standing up all day long, and their feet are swollen so that they can't get their shoes on, and have to wear rubbers."

Janet made a pitying exclamation.

"There is a factory inspector lives in our ward," Sonya continued, "and she said to the boss he couldn't do that; the little girls had to have chairs. The boss he was mad, but he said 'All right.' Then she went back to see if he had the chairs, and they were there, but all piled up on top of each other. He would not let the little girls sit on them, for he said it took too much room. My little cousin cries at night with her feet. It's no use to report Levy, Schwartz and Guyon to the office of State Factory Inspection, because nothing will be done to them; they give too much money to politics."

Sonya paused and looked gravely at Ellen, whose face wore a stony expression.

"I saw by the paper to-day that you were going to be at a big suffrage meeting this afternoon," she said. "It said you believed in the vote for women. The suffrage is to help us all, whether we have a big house like this or have to pull bastings in a factory. So I thought I would come to you and ask you to speak to the boss, so the little girls can rest their feet and not cry in the night."

Sonya had spoken with much quiet force, and Janet was deeply touched. But when Ellen answered, her voice was absolutely unmoved.

"I am very sorry," she said, "but I never interfere with my father's business."

"I didn't mean interfere," Sonya persisted. "But maybe your father doesn't know about these little girls, and that they could sit down just as easy as not, only the boss is cross and fat and doesn't like to squeeze himself in if he has to pass their chairs."

"My father has perfect confidence in his managers," Ellen said, rather impatiently. "If the chairs are not used there must be some good reason for it."

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Sonya opened her lips once more, for she knew how a hurt child's crying sounds in the night, and her knowledge gave her courage.

"You could investigate and see if what I tell you isn't true," she said.

"It is quite impossible, quite," Ellen said, in a tone of finality. "If it is a question of finding larger shoes for the little girls of whom you speak, I can manage that. But that is all. If you care to wait I'll have a maid bring you the shoes."

A deep color burned in Sonya's face.

"It is not charity I came to ask you for," she said, "but just humanity."

She opened the door and went away. As Blair was following her Ellen said to him:

"I hope you see the impossibility of my going to my father with a matter like this. He doesn't care to have me concern myself about the details of his business."

"I told Miss Riborsky that was about what you'd say," remarked Blair. "Good afternoon." He added to Janet, "Are you coming, Miss Bellamy?"

"Yes," Janet said. "Good-by, Miss Guyon."

"So glad you came," murmured Ellen, her eyes averted.

Janet gave a sigh of relief when the great door closed behind her. As she and Blair walked down the steps he said:

"I told Sonya she was foolish to appeal to any of these women. The thing to do is to get her little cousin another job."

"Please, Mr. Blair, will you talk of something else?" said Janet, in a low tone. "I—I can't seem to bear it just now."

"Ah! I'm glad you feel for us," he said. "I'd like to think that your young fresh strength belonged to us."

She smiled faintly, reflecting that Blair probably could not help having that "promising pupil" attitude toward people. She thought she would like to see him in the

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society of some one whom he considered an equal. She was sure he would not admit to having any superiors. Blair's democracy would not have admitted the possibility of inferiors. His theory was that the only man quite free from snobbishness was the one who never had or felt the "that sort of person" attitude, and yet Blair could not have abandoned his attitude of patronage any more than he could have been convinced that he possessed it.

"Suppose we talk of Wilson," he said. "That seems to be a topic we both like. By the way," he added, with one of his curious bursts of frankness, "I've met the young woman he is engaged to. He introduced us on the day of his father's funeral. I've seen her once since. I don't believe he'll ever marry her. She's not a real person."

He had certainly said something which carried Janet out of herself.

"Why, what do you mean?" she said, in a startled tone.

"Simply, she's not big enough for him."

"Plenty of women aren't big enough for the men they love, or are too big," said Janet, in rather a bitter tone. "It doesn't seem to matter in marriage."

"The girl hasn't the slightest notions of what Wilson's principles are!" went on Blair, indignantly. "She actually hinted to me that I ought to persuade him that it was his duty not to live on the West Side! She reminded me that Wilson's poor old father had died happy in the thought that he was going to leave his son a rich man, and that it was Dick's duty not to disappoint him, or words to that effect."

Janet walked on beside him, reflecting with a little twisted smile that Sallie's arguments would take just that line.

"She objects to his living as simply almost as if he were a working-man, and spending his money on reforms and movements," Blair went on. "What she really means is that people like Mrs. Ryder won't come to call on her if she lives over in the Harrowgate; and, besides, she wants a car."

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"Poor little Sallie," murmured Janet.

She was thinking of Wilson and Sallie only with the surface of her mind. Her feelings were still engaged with the scene she had just witnessed between Ellen and Sonya. But with the top of her mind she felt a pride in Wilson. He had acted as she had hoped he would. She had read and heard of people who had made sacrifices for the sake of principles, but she had never before met any one who had been ready wholly to use himself and his money for the sake of an ideal.

Gregory had had enough to say about ideals; but she reflected cynically that Gregory's ideals were the sort that were neatly labeled and stored away for some remote use, and that he had never meant to pay for them with anything taken out of himself. Charters had ideals, and lived up to them; but they called for smaller and less picturesque sacrifices of self than those Wilson proposed making.

Blair left her at the door of the Ryder house. Janet entered, still unwilling to let her feelings play about Sonya and Ellen. She had a curious feeling that she was on the brink of something important, and a shyness equally strange about approaching it. Eager to get away from herself, she went into the nursery and began playing a game with Grace's younger children. The day before she had been telling them the life story of a butterfly, and now she proposed that they act it out. The eldest girl was at that stage of development when she considered an adult silly for pretending to be a child with children, and she was at the same time passionately envious of that adult for being old enough to attempt to do anything she chose. The child's manners were too good to let her face show what she was thinking, but her superior air of reading an improving book with the light properly coming over her left shoulder would have been a sufficient rebuke to an observing elder.

The other little ones carried out the drama delightedly.

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The youngest, who was too indiscriminating to know that the most obnoxious rôle had been given her, squirmed as a larva upon the rug before the fire. As she was a baby of privilege, her lot was idealized; the rug was of white bearskin, the fire was held away from her by a screen, while the firelight fell prettily on her little pink knees and filmy dress. The third child soared on one leg, flapping two thin arms, craning her slim little neck, her face wearing an intent, straining expression, which was her translation of the way a butterfly should feel when it was winging its free way about in the beautiful world.

The second child stood at Janet's side. She was wrapped from crown to sole in afghans and scarfs and veils, and was a very helpless bundle indeed. Her stiff little body expressed the conviction that she ought to be satisfied with her rôle of chrysalis; but her head was bowed forward, and she was trying to peer through her wrappings to see how her sisters were acting their parts. Ada came in and sat on a footstool, smiling at the players. The nurse in charge hovered solidly in the background, maintaining a manner of discreet respect, but atmospherically conveying disapproval. The nursery was her domain; the mistress who paid her wages and who chanced to be the mother of the children might come in and exercise a kind of regent sway; it is well understood that a certain sort of formal deference must be shown regents. But regents can at times be firmly put aside, and there were occasions when Grace was not allowed to remain as long as she wanted to in the nursery, because little Miss Grace's temperature had risen and the presence of her mother excited her. Some other persons were permitted only on the lightest suffrance, especially a private secretary, who took wages, even if she did call it a salary, and quite as especially a guest in the house of whom the children seemed to be growing almost too fond.

"It's nearly time for Grace to run in," Ada said, rising.

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Grace liked to be alone with her children. Janet began to unwind the chrysalis-child.

"Look, sweetheart," she said, her voice at its most beautiful, and while that voice increased the nurse's respect, it intensified her jealousy. "Look, sweetheart, your walls are getting thinner and thinner, and thinner and thinner. Now you can hear the big world outside; now you can almost see it; now you can quite see it. Now you are free and in it."

The late chrysalis waved her arms and hopped rather more like barn-yard fowl than a butterfly. Janet kissed her and went out with Ada.

"It's a pretty firelight scene," she said, rather wistfully. "One is sorry they ever have to grow up."

"Oh, nonsense," said Ada; "they'll probably have a glorious time when they grow up. Forgive me, Janet, I'm not in a sentimental mood to-day. I'm off to the library now. Harrison's just come in, and I'm going to waylay him for a contribution he's promised me. And, by the way, you are exactly like that chrysalis you were dramatizing!"

She hurried down the main staircase. Janet looked after her with a smile in which there was some triumph and some trepidation.

"If I am a chrysalis," she said, intensely, "I am just on the point of breaking through into the daylight."

Grace came along the hall, moving rather languidly.

"Tired?" asked Janet.

"A bit," replied Grace. "One of the suffrage committees stayed for a meeting after you went off this afternoon, and they did rant so, and were so dull. Then I went to drive, and I did something stupid; I left the baby's medicine and the prescription, too, at the druggist's downtown. I'll have to telephone for it, and they're so slow about sending."

"Let me drive down for it," Janet said. "This dress will do for dinner, and I'd love to go."

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"You dear!" said Grace. "Now I can forgive those suffrage women for being tiresome."

Janet looked at her cousin curiously.

"Grace," she asked, "are you really in this woman movement heart and soul for the sake of the thing itself, or are you doing it only because it's in the trend of things, and you like to be in the trend, when you are not anticipating it?"

Grace did not answer for a moment. They were standing at the head of the main staircase beside a heavily upholstered seat. Grace drew Janet down upon it and took her hand. An electric current of sympathy united the two. From the nursery they could hear the bird-like voices of the children and the tinkle of the piano, where one of the governesses was playing a lullaby. A soft-footed maid passed them, carrying a bouquet of flowers that was to be put on Grace's dressing-table. Long ago Ryder had left with a florist an order to supply his wife every day with flowers, and long ago he had forgotten that he had ever had such a sentiment. At the end of the hall a fireplace blazed with a long, flaming log, which cast a flickering shadow on the rich, dark wood of the walls. Surely, Janet thought, this home spelt the last word of luxury, and should have been the fit setting for peace and happiness. It was not the first time that she had felt that there was something unsatisfied and poignant about Grace; but Janet, under the régime of Gregory, had had a curious inappreciation for the problems of those already married. A woman who was married, in her view, had her life made, if not finished; all Janet's interest had been for the girl whose life was in the making, who was waiting for love and marriage.

Grace pressed Janet's hand and answered her question.

"I'm quite tired of going from one thing to another," she said. "It's all too casual. I want something to express myself in, as a business man does, or as an actress or a musician would—something that will be permanent."

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The soft-footed maid repassed, carrying away the bouquet of roses which had stood on Grace's dressing-table during the day. Grace watched her until she had disappeared, wondering with a faint smile what would become of those discarded flowers. They were too fresh to be thrown away. What woman of her household would have them next, and would some man of her household admire them, or fail to admire them without any knowledge of what those flowers had symbolized?

"You mustn't think that at forty there are no readjustments to be made, nothing else to look for," Grace sighed.

"It would almost seem," Grace went on, "that the more money and freedom one has, the more one is really hampered. One must do so many things in a certain way. I see that when I look about at my friends. Most of them have enough money, and can have any one they care to include in their circle. I suppose their homes are managed more or less as mine is. My children are beautifully cared for, from all points of view, and they don't need their mother very much. I question whether children ever need a mother as much as she needs them. Harrison Ryder, like most men, needs his work more than anything else in the world. I am beginning to wonder if every one doesn't need some work. All my time is occupied, but that's not the same thing."

The bird-like voices of the children poured out of the nursery as a maid opened the door. Grace smiled tenderly.

"That's the best thing in the world, my dear," she said, "children. Be thankful you've had your disappointment in love, for it will take the first edge off your emotion. Some day, when your head and heart are steadier, marry and have children." She rose, adding: "I must run in to mine."

They heard the rather raucous laugh of Ryder in the hall below. Involuntarily the two glanced downward. Ryder and Ada were coming up-stairs, he with his hand under her

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elbow. Ada was looking into his eyes in the charming, personal manner that was always hers when she was talking to any man in whom she was interested. Ada did not know how challenging, how provocative that glance was. As she turned it upon Ryder it meant that she admired him, because he was Harrison Ryder, because he was a power in the world of finance, because he had added power to what he had inherited, and because he was an attractive man.

Ryder's glance said that he recognized the challenge, and was ready to respond to it. It was the look of a man who had no belief whatever in platonic friendship, and no scruple in the world about amusing himself. It was not the look that a wife cares to see in her husband's eyes for another woman. As Ryder looked at Ada he bent toward her, so that his shoulder touched hers. He smiled, and his eyes grew even more significant. Ada started, gave him a brief staring glance, colored hotly, and moved away from him.

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GRACE rose, saying to Janet in a calm, hard voice: "I must see those blessed babies."

Mechanically Janet responded to her cousin's lead.

"I'll fly down-town and get that medicine," she said.

Grace passed along the hall to the nursery. Ada hurried up the stairs and went by Janet with some murmured word about only a few minutes to dress for dinner. Ryder mounted a few steps behind her, his breath coming rather heavily.

"Hello!" he said, as Janet would have passed him. "Aren't you going the wrong way?"

Janet forced herself to meet his eyes.

"I'm going to run down-town for some medicine for the baby."

"You haven't much time before dinner. Just come in, haven't you?"

"I've been having tea with Ellen Guyon."

"Was her young man there? He has to be, poor fellow. Ellen is bound to keep him now she's got him. Well, that's a woman's job; love, and when possible, marriage. There isn't a girl in a single house in this whole city that isn't just waiting, with her hands folded or not, as the case may be, to get married."

Ryder went on to his own rooms, and Janet, her eyes averted, hurried down-stairs. Dimly she understood that Ryder would not have alluded to love and marriage if it had not been for those moments on the stairs with Ada. Janet colored hotly and felt sick and miserable at heart.

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She welcomed the chill of the air as she stood waiting outside the door for the car to be brought.

"Oh, it's a beast of a world," she said, looking up at the cold stars; "and I don't believe a woman is safe in it as long as she cares enough for a man to let him hurt her."

She got into the car with a sick distaste for the lot of women—their dependence, their desire for love and home. She thought of the fight she had made for Gregory, and the price she had paid in love and pain for mere defeat. She thought of Ellen Guyon, victor over her, and yet not wholly happy, not quite sure that it was love only which had won her man. She thought of Grace Ryder with a husband evidently not entirely to be trusted. Then she thought of Sonya.

Janet had had too much emotion that day. As she dwelt upon Sonya an almost unbearable passion of revolt seized upon her. She was most sweepingly carried out of herself. Sonya wanted love, too, but she did not ask for that. She merely asked for just some fundamental decencies of living—food, shelter, the privilege of not overworking, and a chair to ease her little cousin's feet. And she had come to Ellen, who had everything—everything except a sister's feeling.

Janet thought of the suffrage mass-meeting she had attended that afternoon. It seemed a long time ago now. There had been women in that meeting who had felt that the health and happiness of the working-girl was a matter of concern to every class. There were other women who might come to feel that. The sense of sisterhood Janet had faintly known that afternoon surged in upon her now with an overpowering force. The feminist movement of a sudden became to her a living thing. She saw a new depth in the attitude of Grace and of Ada. She recognized that Grace's restrained but at bottom rather sad attitude was not for herself only; she extended it to all women. She saw a new meaning in Ada's passion-

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ate sex-loyalty. She knew that what was wrong with herself might be wrong with other women. She wished that she might turn into the treasury of the whole the coin of experience for which she had paid such a heavy price. She read herself as undisciplined, as over-emotional.

In that moment a sense of power arose in her, killing forever part of the pain Gregory had cost her. It marked the beginning of the real gathering up of her forces, the real ability to use her will. She was done with the hampering past; she was embarked on the future in which she knew she could forget herself.

"I'll work for women, too," she said, aloud. "I'm not afraid to stand on a platform and speak. I'll do whatever they want me to. It's the end of brooding over my little self. I'm free."

She sat with clasped hands and glorified face, feeling that she had at last found a panacea for all her ills. She was rather in danger of treating the feminist movement as a gospel both new and inevitable, ignorant that, from the point of view of many people, it was neither. On the whole, she did not consider herself as a fount of all wisdom; she was merely sure that she needed to build up in her life some outside broad interest, and that at last she had found it. Like Sonya Riborsky, who had to have a kind of cosmic enthusiasm in order to live, so Janet, who had been feeling for something to live for, something by which she could protect herself, had got to the end of at least one stage of her search. She had a sense of sureness which had not been hers for many a long day. Suddenly she felt larger, wiser.

She remembered Ryder's words to her on the stairs about love and marriage.

"Why," she gasped, "what was I doing in his house but waiting for some other man besides Mark? What other result could there be if I had gone on brooding?"

It struck her that all the girls she knew were doing exactly what she had been doing before she met Gregory

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—waiting for life to bring them husbands. They were more self-controlled, more indirect about it than she had been; but still that was their business. It is, of course, the business of any woman; but Janet, with sudden illumination, saw for herself in that attitude only fresh tragedy. She had no home, no imperative family duties in the sense in which the other girls and women she knew had such duties. If she stayed in Grace's house with no external object, what could she do but fall back into her old emotional attitude of longing for love? Love had passed by, she thought; she was still far from the point where she would admit that one could really love twice. Since love had passed her by, would it not be disastrous for her to remain in an atmosphere where love was the game?

The car stopped before the druggist's, and the chauffeur went into the shop for the medicine. As Janet was staring absently out of the window she saw Gregory on his way from the Illinois Central station, evidently destined to dine at Ellen Guyon's. He was plodding against a heavy wind, and an old instinct arose in Janet, an impulse to protect her Mark against the elements, against everything in life uncomfortable and unchancy. She opened the door to call him. With her hand still on the latch that impulse to take care of him passed, but not her intention to speak to him.

"Mark," she called, "come here!"

He started and advanced slowly. Janet looked almost lovely as she leaned forward, the scarf slipping from her soft hair, her eyes mysterious in the darkness of the car. For a moment the old spell was upon Gregory.

"I'm going your way," she said, gently; "won't you let me drive you over?"

Gregory had always liked Janet's voice. He saw no humor in the fact that the girl he had jilted was doing him the favor of dropping him at the house of her successor. He got in beside her, and Janet spoke to the chauffeur.

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"This is good of you, Janet," said Gregory, as the car sped smoothly on.

"Not at all," she returned. "It seemed too bad for you to take a street-car when this route is so much more comfortable. Besides, aren't you a bit late?"

"I'm afraid so," he said, indifferently.

Janet sat beside him in the shadows, wondering why she had spoken to him. Gregory seemed quite unembarrassed. He had insensibly sunk back upon Janet's sympathy, which he had always found so ready.

"The wonder is, not that I'm late to-night," he said, gloomily, "but that I'm ever on time. All these dinners and entertainments cut so into a man's work."

Janet almost laughed, and her slight embarrassment quite vanished. Did Mark want her to condole with him because his engagement to Ellen had cut into his precious scholar's time? The little sense of elation that she had had when she had been that afternoon with Ellen Guyon came back, and with it the accompanying sense of superiority.

"Ah," she said, lightly, "but all these entertainments are a girl's due. They can only come once."

"I wish the man's part in them could be done vicariously," remarked Gregory.

The sense of what he had been saying at last struck him, and he looked uneasily at Janet. Her face was quite serene, and in the half-shadows, beautiful. He felt again something of a resurgence of his old interest in her. Why could not they be friends at least?

"Janet," he began, "this is awfully good of you. I've missed you this year, I can tell you."

Suddenly Janet gave a long sigh. She was absorbed in a new sweeping emotion—gratitude that she was freed from the misery of a gnawing love. She knew better than to think that the freedom had come instantaneously; the process must have been going on ever since she had lost Gregory; but the realization of it had come suddenly.

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Her joy at being free was not that radiant joy with which she had greeted Gregory's announcement of his love for her; but it was the happiest emotion she had known for a long time, and she embraced it with all her being. New forces surged up in her; she could have sung aloud with her sense of freedom. She was going to live now—a real life, not a self-centered, eating existence.

She turned and looked at Gregory.

"What did you say, Mark?" she said. "That we might be friends?"

"Can't we save something out of the past?" he said. "I haven't failed you as a friend, if I had to as a lover. I appreciate your splendid qualities; I want you in my life. Can't we be as we were—say, two years ago?"

Janet was still looking at him curiously, as at a stranger with whom she had somehow found herself on queer terms of intimacy. She felt the crudeness of his appeal, which was really not an appeal but an offer, he was so sure she needed him still. A faint moral contempt arose in her, and with it a social contempt. After all, Gregory's people were peasants, and he was showing all the rawness of a peasant. Could he be the man she had loved? Then what a stranger that Janet must have been who could have loved him!

Gregory felt her withdrawal. At that moment she had more real power over him than she had ever had, precisely because he was conscious that she would not use it. He knew that she was drifting away, knew blunderingly that she did not think him good enough. As her own sense of shame and worthlessness vanished forever Gregory felt an irritating sense of humiliation. He would have asked her not to reply to his remark if he had dared.

"Two years ago?" she said. "That was just before we were engaged, wasn't it? Oh no; really, Mark, it would be quite impossible for me to believe in you and feel toward you as I did then. To-night, that seems a very long time ago. I was a school-girl idealizing my teacher.

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We couldn't go back to that. With a sweetheart you don't need friends. For my part, I've no desire to pick up any of our past. I've pushed it away. It's quite all right, my being so frank, isn't it? For I'm sure nothing I could say could disturb you."

The car stopped before the Guyon house, and Gregory got out a little gropingly. He suddenly felt angry. Underneath her beautiful, even tones had there been the least touch of good-natured scorn? It could scarcely be! He glanced at her face; it was quite unmoved, quite inscrutable. Suddenly he felt defeated, tired out, as unwilling to go to Ellen as he was to return to Janet.

"Good night," he mumbled.

"Good night," said Janet, happily.

She sank back against the cushions with a long breath of relief. She was free—free from Gregory, and free from the desire to love or be loved. Ada and Charters, Wilson and Blair, who had urged her to find something to do, would see now that they need never consider her a parasite again. She thought of them all, but particularly of Wilson. It was characteristic of poor Janet that even in this hour of victory she could not be impersonal; she had to turn to some human being. Life was good and sweet; there could be friendship in it, if not love.

She felt glad of her young, fresh strength. The energy that she had never been able to give to books she felt that she would be able to give to her new life, because it would be a life of action, of really achieving something. The energy that had gone to the dream lover and then to Gregory she meant to compel into some profitable fruit for other women. It should help them, and it should not hurt her. She thought pityingly of Sonya and her needs, of what she knew in Ada as a keen heart-hunger, of Grace and her problem, of Wilson's sorrow over his father's death and the distress he must feel at Sallie's dissatisfactions; but all this tale of shadow could not dull her own splendor of living. She felt her physical life too warmly,

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even while she was conning over the griefs of those she cared for. She pitied them, but she felt an increasing joy in her personal strength.

Her old belief in herself had come back; her sense that she could meet any situation adequately, and that what she wanted in life she could get. But now, she told herself, she was asking for something impersonal, and therefore big and noble—and safe. No more Gregory; no more self; no more loving! Thus her thoughts crooned themselves over and over in an enthusiasm of youth and gladness. It was as well for her peace of mind that she was unable to estimate the traps that young blood can lay for itself, unconscious that no one with feeling can be safe from life this side of the grave.

XXII

LOVE UNAWARE

IT was two months later, and Janet was just leaving a crowded hall where she had most successfully made her first speech for equal suffrage. She was elated at the thought of her recent words, and at the praise she had received from the committee on arrangements, and it added an especial touch to her excitement to find Wilson at the door waiting for her.

"You!" she said. "Did you hear my speech?"

"Indeed I did," he replied. "Mrs. Ryder asked me to come and to bring you home."

"I'm glad you were here, since Grace couldn't be," she said. "I wanted some one I knew—so long as I didn't fail."

"Mrs. Ryder asked me to say she couldn't send the car; something has gone wrong with it. Consider me as representing the car."

Janet laughed.

"You haven't told me how you liked my talk," she said.

"Immensely," he told her.

He touched on what he had thought her most telling points, and she drank in his praise eagerly.

"I was afraid when I saw you at first," she said; "but when I found it was going well, I was glad you were there. I wish Sallie could have come."

A troubled look crossed his face.

"Sallie doesn't seem to be very well," he said. "I wish I needn't disappoint her." Before Janet could reply, he added, quickly, "Sha'n't I call a cab?"

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"Spoil a night like this!" cried Janet. "Oh no, I want to walk. It's not more than a couple of miles, and I'm too enthusiastic to be able to sit in a cab."

It was a still night, quite cold. Even the row of red-brick houses which they were passing seemed chill, and as if they would be icy to the touch. The street-lamps creaked stiffly and cast broken shadows on the dank pavement. The stars were large with that frosted hardness they seem to have on a cold, quiet night. The few people they passed were walking in that attitude of half-crouched, absorbed haste which means an intent aim for shelter. But Janet's warmth of spirit rendered her impervious to any suggestions of hardship, and Wilson fell in with her mood.

"This thing I'm doing now," Janet said, "is so real. How could I ever have been content with my University work, with mere books? They seem so scattering, leading nowhere."

"How do you know you are going to find this permanently satisfying?" Wilson teased her. "It's just the change that stimulates you. It's like going to a new country, or taking—"

He was going to add, "taking a new wife," but for some obscure reason he did not finish his sentence.

"Of course I'll find suffrage permanently satisfying!" she cried. "It's the biggest thing there is, and one of the few things where women of all classes can find a common meeting-ground."

Wilson looked down on the bright face beside him. The cold always beautified Janet, crimsoned her cheeks without pinching them, and shot a golden fire into her amber eyes.

"You'd call me a sentimentalist if I warned you to look for the coming of the larger vision," he said. "One of these days you'll be working for men and women both."

"Perhaps," she said, musingly. "I really feel as if there were plenty of people in the world who had been

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looking after men for a long time. It's the cause of women which needs recruits."

They were passing a street-lamp as she spoke, and as she glanced up at him she caught the gleam of his blue eyes, and the rather rugged line of his cheek, and she thought somewhat indignantly that Sallie might make his way a little easier than she had. For all her emotional vibrations, Janet often thought of her friends in terms of ideas, for she always had her keenest comprehension of fact or ideas through people. Gregory had helped her comprehension of literary and scholarly ideas. Charters had given her some vague notions of economics. But Wilson was a larger person than either Gregory or Charters. Moreover, he had made a real sacrifice for his ideals. The most inconsequential incident he told her became touched with fine meanings, because she saw it in the light of his abnegations.

She was feeling all this as she looked up at him, unconsciously offering him a deference and admiration which carried even on a cold night. Janet felt glad of his friendship, and it was constitutionally impossible for her to have a friendship without leaning and clinging.

They were walking briskly. A sharp wind had arisen and was behind them. When they reached the Drive Janet suggested that they go out on the pier. She was elated with her sense of achievement, and she welcomed a battle with primitive forces of wind and cold. She might have been the loser where her emotions were concerned; but she was never a loser in a struggle with nature. To go steadily the length of the pier, however, was a sharper test of her powers of endurance than she had supposed. She was tired and breathless when they reached the end, and stood looking out over the dark reaches of water, flecked close to shore with patches of floating ice.

"Your teeth are playing like castanets," Wilson said. "We must go back."

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As he spoke the wind swept in heavily. Janet staggered, her foot turned, and she fell. As she slipped over the pier her coat caught on a twisted spike and she hung, suspended, the cloth and fur slowly ripping. Instantly Wilson was on his knees above her. Bracing himself, he seized her arms, steadily drew her upright, and then quickly lifted her back on the pier. He helped her to her feet and held her against his shoulder, and they stared at each other a moment, Janet white and shaken.

Wilson was breathing almost in sobs, like a man spent with long running. His dark face was drawn and pallid, and one corner of his upper lip was held back sharply from his teeth. His eyes were fixed but piercing. Janet gazed, fascinated; never before had she seen a man laboring under such strong emotion.

"I might have lost you," Wilson said, hoarsely. "My darling, I might have lost you!"

They did not relax their hard, keen stare at each other. Wilson's look was that of a man gazing down a far road, seeing something approaching him, something that he knows is his, and which he yet cannot recognize. He seemed to listen to his own words as if some one else had spoken them. A look of surprise crossed his face; it changed to something like horror. Then he threw his head back, defiantly, as if to say that those had been his own words, his own heart speaking, and he would not repudiate them.

Only then did Janet realize that she had heard him aright. That look on his face was unmistakable. Her first reaction was one of violent distaste that love in any form should have come near her again. She had seen for some time that life and love were no longer the simple matters she had supposed them to be when she was a child and a student of books. Then she could have summed up her whole philosophy in one sentence: "Two meet, love, and marry." She had been taught since that plenty of people met and never loved, or loved and then ceased

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to love, or married and never knew what real love was. She had passionately reacted against the fact that love is an element in life not necessarily steady, not always illuminating, and yet she saw the immense importance of that fact. She did not care to decide whether love was the noble thing she had once believed it, or whether it is only our dreams of it that are noble. She felt too helpless and inexperienced to place it in the scheme of things. She merely wished to push it away from her life, except in its more general applications. What Ada called sexuality, what she felt as sisterhood, she welcomed. She wanted to transform her emotions into that sort of thing. Further, she wanted friendship, but she did not want any man to look at her as Wilson was looking.

She began to walk quickly shoreward, Wilson beside her, holding her arm to guide her under the heavy blasts of wind.

"I wouldn't have believed that this could have happened to me," he said, his voice still hoarse, and with a note of astonishment in it almost grotesque.

He could have said nothing that would have so readily convinced Janet that what he felt was real. It did not render any less keen her sense of outraged loyalty to Sallie, but somehow it made Sallie of very much less importance than she had been a moment before. She walked on in silence, resenting the fact that she had to lean on his arm, and yet unable to breast the wind without him. She grated her teeth at a need of dependence on him at this moment. She hoped it was not a symbol of the sort of thing that was always going to happen to her. She felt an insensate rage at Wilson, and all the time she had an appreciation of the absurd irony of the situation—that Gregory, whom she had loved, had cared for a little while for Sallie, and that the man Sallie loved had grown to care for her. Yet with it all was a strange, petty sort of pride that Wilson was worth more than Gregory.

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"I—I don't know what to say," said Wilson, haltingly. "I don't know what to do. This is against reason. I don't believe in a man finding out suddenly that he's in love. And then poor little Sallie—" he broke off, abruptly.

His face was bewildered and tense. He stared straight ahead of him, as if seeking in the cold, impersonal night for some explanation of how this had all come about.

"Won't you—speak to me?" he said.

"Oh," said Janet, passionately, "sometimes I think I hate men! Why are you so fickle? Why is love such a slight matter to you that you can turn so easily from one girl to another?"

He felt her arm vibrate against his. She was blaming him because Gregory had loved her, and then Sallie, and then Ellen Guyon—cheap enough treasure he had had to give! She blamed him because Charters had loved her instead of Sonya Riborsky. She blamed him for loving Sallie and then herself. And her unreasonableness, her flash of rage made her face beautiful.

Wilson turned away his eyes from her face.

"You don't love me," he stated, rather than asked.

"I? How could I love you?" she cried, stormily.

They walked on silently, while Wilson went back over the events of the past two or three years. He realized that if he had met Sallie in Chicago he would never have been especially attracted toward her; but they had been isolated in Wisconsin, and propinquity had made a factitious bond between them. Later, after he had returned to Chicago, he had responded to her need of him.

"You see, I always thought the work I wanted to do would come first with me," he said, rather to himself than to Janet. "I didn't think this could happen!"

She made no reply, and he stopped abruptly again, as if his own voice had surprised him. He reflected drearily that when he made conditions in his proposal to Sallie that very fact should have warned him that he did not love her enough.

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"Poor little thing," he said, aloud.

Janet knew he was thinking of Sallie, and her heart warmed to him. After all, why should she be hard on any one because his love had changed? She herself, whose love was to last forever, did not love Gregory any more. He might pass before her showing Ellen Guyon the utmost devotion, and the girl he had jilted would feel no wound. So, Janet asked herself, if her own love had not lasted when it had been nourished by pain, what right had she to judge any one else?

"I don't believe I understand about love," she said to Wilson, gently. "I used to think it was unmistakable when it came; yet a fine man like you can change. There may be light men who can love faithfully. Ah, I don't know anything about it."

"If you mean is my love for you the real thing—" began Wilson, tempted.

"Oh, don't," she interrupted. "We mustn't talk of it. I don't love you. And if I did, I don't believe that I could hurt Sallie. She's so fragile, and in a way she has so little— No, I don't think I could hurt another girl."

"In a way I'm glad you don't love me," Wilson said, gloomily. "I wouldn't dare tempt myself with the hope—"

He paused, remembering the girl who had taken her life because his brother had ceased to love her.

They turned off the pier and began to walk along the Drive, Janet reflecting ironically that all her proposals seemed to take place on a pier.

"What will you do?" she asked Wilson, gently.

"I've been wondering," he said, drearily. "It seems such a long time ago since I said that to you on the pier."

He knitted his brows heavily, and then he went on.

"If you loved me—I don't know. I suppose we'd both begin by sentimentalizing, which would mean that I must marry Sallie, and you and I must walk alone the rest of our lives. Perhaps we could carry it out, and per-

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haps we could not. But by that attempt two people would be unhappy."

There was something hard in Wilson, she reflected. She did not wonder that he had assumed that his work would come first.

"Fortunately for Sallie," he continued, dryly, "you don't love me." Then he added, huskily, "You don't think you ever could—under any circumstances?"

"Please!" said Janet, almost fiercely. "If you only knew how anxious I am never to love and never to suffer! I loved once, and paid. I don't want ever to do it again. I wish I could be a mere spectator of life. It's my nature to come to grips with things. But it shall be work, and not love."

Wilson did not speak what was in his mind—that she might not love him, but that one day she would surely love some one. All that splendid vitality could not spend itself in work merely. It was meant for a man and for children.

"With the slate cleared of you and me," he said, "I think I can be good to Sallie."

"It will be hard for you to live in that flat now," said Janet, suddenly.

"I'm afraid I'll see you in it as I saw you in the flesh there a few weeks ago," Wilson said, and his voice was hungry.

The hot blood flooded Janet's cheeks. With her flaming imagination she could see in that situation far more than Wilson could. She could visualize Wilson, seated in one of the big arm-chairs, his eyes closed, seeing the Janet that never was to be his going softly from room to room, standing by the fireplace, sitting at the tea-table. As a matter of fact, Wilson had had a fleeting image of Janet as his wife, instead of Sallie, and had quickly shut his mind against the picture.

"Oh, I didn't mean *that*," Janet said. "I was thinking just that—the nineteenth ward is your choice of residence,

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not hers, and that she'd rather live on the North Side. I thought that now, perhaps—"

She paused, and he laughed drearily, understanding that because of his treachery to Sallie he must make some compromise for her.

"I can't give up the place," he said, shortly. "Don't you see that this is going to be hard for me? You're too much of an idealist, Janet. You send me with shining eyes down a hard road, and those eyes are lifted so high that you don't see how I'm stumbling and bruising my feet."

"Yes," Janet said, humbly, "I know I'm very ready to believe that other people ought to do hard things."

"I'll take Sallie away on a three-months honeymoon," he said. "That will please her."

There was a tenderness in his voice that rather astonished Janet. She had half expected that this discovery of his love for herself would sweep the little person out of his consciousness entirely. Having done with emotion, however, she told herself that it was no concern of hers what multiform shapes the love of a man might take. She must regard Wilson merely as her friend, or she would not regard him at all.

They were passing the splendid houses which sat with their backs to the city and their faces to the wide lake. In spite of their reserved magnificence they might have warned Janet that love knows no barriers; class and money, marriage laws and good taste, fear of giving pain and a calling for one's own—all such confusions and conflicts—she might have divined on any street; they could have told Janet that Wilson thought that love had not done with her yet, for every one of those houses had been a theater of the emotions, and their quiet walls locked away a good many unset scenes.

At the door of the Ryder house Wilson took Janet's hand in a long clasp. He looked searchingly in her face, as if he were quite sure he could never again see it without

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a mask upon his own. He drank in the amber eyes, troubled now, the little curls tangling under her fur hat, the full, red lips a little parted.

"Good-by," he said, gently. "If I told you I was sorry I had let you know of this, I am afraid it would not be true. If I said I was ashamed, that would be a lie, too."

"Oh, I wish this had never happened," Janet said, "for I valued your friendship so! I needed you so much!"

A little comfort crept into Wilson's set face. He had not let himself think he needed comfort. He seized on the idea of friendship, and his eyes, like her own, were full of the idealist's light.

"The friendship can go on—after a while," he said. "I promise you that. I believe in character enough to know that this feeling of mine isn't any good unless it will help us both. Some day I'll be back, just your reliable friend. Good-by, Janet."

"Good-by, Richard," she said, gravely. "I'll trust my friend when he comes back just as much as I always have."

The great oak door opened to receive her. As it closed she thought:

"I'm going to shut the door of my mind hard against this episode. It shall be as if it had never been."

Yet she knew well enough that no woman can ever forget the man of commanding personality who loves her.

XXIII

JANET MAKES A DECISION

A FORTNIGHT later Janet mounted the steps of the Ryder house, tired after a suffrage dinner where there had been a good deal of discussion and some strenuous committee work. The face of the man who opened the door for her was as impassive as usual.

"The car was sent for you, I see," he was thinking. "So long as that happens the family approves of your goings-on. There's a bit of your skirt braid showing; they all come to it."

But none of this was in his voice when he said:

"There are letters for you in the library, Miss Bellamy. Miss Sargent got home this afternoon, and asked me to tell you as soon as you got in."

Janet murmured her thanks and went into the library, smiling to think that presently she would be greeting Ada. Quick words ran through her mind, the little river of speech which would soon be saying that she had missed Ada so very much during her prolonged vacation. She stood in the library before the fireplace, drawing a long sigh of content. It was good to be alive, to have the women with whom she worked for the cause assuring her that she was a valuable aid. It was good to have friends—Grace, Ada, Wilson. As she thought of Wilson she lifted her head, a little, sweet, vague smile crossed her lips, and she murmured:

"I am the master of my soul,
I am the captain of my fate."

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She would have been very much astonished and chagrined if she could have been convinced that Wilson had anything to do with the utterances of these verses. She would have denied that Wilson's revelation of his love for her had any effect upon her; she would have insisted that she must be quite untouched because she was Sallie's friend. And yet the experience had given to her whole living a fillip. It was doubtless unworthy, but at the bottom of Janet's heart there was a feeling something like this:

"You did jilt me, Mark Gregory, and you've married a girl with money. But a better man than you in every way—spiritually, mentally, financially—loves me. That sets me right where you are concerned. And neither of you can hurt me, or touch me; no man can; I'm free!"

She picked up her letters. There was one thick envelope in Sallie's handwriting with a New York postmark. She was surprised, for Sallie, she had thought, was in Wisconsin. What could she be doing in New York? She opened the envelope; it held Sallie's wedding-cards. Janet stared with astonishment and then nodded in comprehension. She thought she understood; Wilson wanted to get the marriage over. It was strange that Sallie had not written her that the date was to be changed. Not that it mattered.

She looked into the fire; the marriage had been two days before. She wondered how a man would act when he was morally pledged to show tenderness to one woman and was thinking of another. She was so thoroughly monogamous in her attitude that she did not realize that Wilson was not necessarily thinking of the girl he really loved at all moments when he was with one of whom he was also fond and to whom he was married. Janet thought with unnecessary sentimentality of Sallie's expectant face, of her waiting for the love-making which had always so far been laid at her indifferent little feet. Mingled with her sympathy for both was again the curious, irrepressible exultance that she was free.

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Slowly she took off her wraps and stretched out her arms to the blaze with a luxurious gesture, enjoying her state of physical well-being. She liked the feel of her soft skin as she passed her hand over her cheek. In a way the day had been a drawing together of many of the forces in her life. Grace had just returned from a brief visit she had been paying to Bellamy and Cousin Lillas, which had made all four of them more pleasantly conscious of their blood-tie. Grace and she had spent the morning talking about it all. In the afternoon she had lunched with one of Grace's friends, and they had gone on to a concert. In the box next them Gregory and his wife had sat; it had been Janet's first test of his nearness since his marriage, and she had sustained it merely with a hard feeling of dislike. Her love for him had been so violent that it was most naturally replaced by dislike, more especially when she recalled her utter lack of pride.

After the concert she had met Charters and Blair walking up Michigan Avenue in the best of spirits. They had signed articles of partnership that afternoon; Charters felt that his career was already made, and Blair had the mood of the hero who bends graciously to his worshiper. Janet's perception of their attitudes had pleased her; she was quite naïve enough to feel gratified when she thought she was exclusively savoring a characteristic phase of human nature. Then had come the suffrage dinner, with the attendant compliments for her—just in time, for once or twice her superabundant vitality had made her question whether the cause was quite enough to fill her life. The appreciation of her fellow-workers convinced her that it was. Afterward had come the drive home, with the anticipation of seeing Ada, and now this announcement of the marriage of Wilson and Sallie, which was rather thrilling. It seemed to Janet as if her life were marking itself off in a most interesting way.

Picking up her wraps and letters, she went up-stairs. As she paused for a moment by the main staircase on the

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second floor, she saw Grace coming out of the nursery with her head bent. Janet hurried forward.

"Is one of the children ill, Grace?" she cried.

Grace lifted her head and stared. Suddenly she stepped back a pace, almost as if Janet and her immediate surroundings had come too close.

"Oh no," she said, in her usual tone. "Nothing is wrong. I slipped in to see my babies asleep."

Janet felt oddly disquieted because Grace had said "my" babies, instead of "the" babies.

"We had a glorious time at the dinner," she said. "They all missed you, and said nice things."

"Very sweet of them," Grace said, rather abruptly, and passed on to her own rooms.

Janet went up the second flight of stairs and down the hall to the door of Ada's writing-room. She tapped, calling with expectant pleasure in her tone:

"It's Janet."

For two or three minutes no one answered. Janet, thinking that Ada must be in her bedroom adjoining, knocked again. Then Ada's muffled voice said:

"A moment."

Ada opened the door, and Janet saw that she was white and trembling. Her loose dressing-jacket fell away from her neck, and showed that the cords of her throat were tense; a little muscle throbbed in one cheek, and she looked at Janet dully.

"Oh, what is it?" cried Janet. "What has happened?"

"Everything," Ada said.

She sank down listlessly on the sofa, while Janet closed the door.

"I have to go away from here," Ada said, tonelessly.

"Go away from *here!*" exclaimed Janet. "When you've just come back? I don't understand—"

"It's a long time since I was twenty-three," said Ada, with apparent irrelevance. "I've forgotten how things seem to one at that age."

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Janet stood looking at her with distressed inquiry in her eyes.

"It's Harrison Ryder," Ada said, bitterly. "He wants to add me to his already full life."

Janet sat down in stricken silence. A slow, painful blush crept over her face. The little darting flames on Ada's hearth seemed as sharp as spears. She kept her eyes fixed upon them; she could not look at Ada.

"This is his house—he might have thought of that," Ada said, in a hard tone. "He might have remembered that I am Grace's friend."

Janet had felt a sudden recoil from Ada; something must be wrong with a woman to whom a man could make such a proposal. But as she looked at Ada's miserable face the criticism vanished, and all her recoil was against Ryder.

"I haven't deserved this," Ada went on. "If you are thinking that my manners to men are—well—different—"

Janet turned away her head; she was thinking just that.

"I know quite well that I don't behave to men as I do to women," Ada said; "few women do. I don't believe a woman when she says she feels exactly the same to another woman as she does to a man. It isn't in nature. We all have the consciousness of sex."

Ada spoke defiantly, as if she were defending herself against some accusation. Janet leaned over and took Ada's hand in hers. It felt lifeless and cold.

"I have an intense loyalty to women; I want to help them," Ada went on, "but I like men better; I find them more interesting. Probably my manner shows it, but it has never been different to Harrison Ryder from what it has to any other man."

"I'm sure it hasn't," Janet said, painfully.

She recollected, indeed, that Ada's manner to Ryder had been much the same that it was to Wilson. She remembered, too, Ada's recoil from Ryder the night that

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had marked her own freedom from Gregory, and, as she supposed, from all the snares of love. Ada alluded to the occasion.

"That night on the stairs," Ada said. "Perhaps you saw when he looked at me then, when he touched me—that's why I went away. That's why I stayed away so long. I thought I could come back and we'd start over. But to-night—"

Janet put her hands over her eyes. She had been hearing enough of the hard phases of life since she had been working for the suffrage cause—phases that enforced laws might remedy. She knew that there were other phases which no laws could touch. Any such experience as Ada's had never seemed likely to approach her life in any way. She had gone past the point of feeling smirched by merely hearing of such evil. But she was utterly shocked.

"It's one matter to be aware that such things are in the world," Janet said, in a low tone, "and quite another when one knows the man—when he's been good to one—"

Her voice broke. Ada sat up on the sofa and looked at her consideringly.

"I suppose I ought to tell you," she said, slowly, "that there's something he happened to learn about me that made him suppose he could—could make this sort of proposal. I didn't know that he knew. He—he threw the information at me—after—when I made him angry by—by telling him what I thought—"

Janet drooped her head. Then she looked up rather timidly at Ada. Ada's face gave her an impression of tragedies not yet burned out, of scars that could still glow and pain. She did not ask herself the nature of this thing in Ada's past. She merely thought, with a sense of discouragement, that time and a cause had not done very much to kill Ada's intensity. Then the exultation she had felt all day reasserted itself a little. No matter what happened to her, she wasn't going to be hurt any more.

Suddenly one new result of her new, ingrowing theories

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of sex-loyalty telegraphed itself from her brain to her heart.

"How could he!" she cried, indignantly. "If there was anything he knew, how could he use it as a lever for—for this sort of thing!"

"Ah, how could he?" repeated Ada, fiercely. "That's the way men will treat a woman who has no home, no intimate background that they've got to respect. She's anybody's prey."

Ada threw herself back upon the sofa and wept, and Janet somehow understood that her tears were partly because she had been insulted, but more because she was lonely, because no one had loved her enough to marry her. Janet remembered all of Ada's devotion to her, and somehow Ada took rank in her heart as her first friend. Grace was her cousin, but Grace, despite her husband's disloyalty, belonged to the protected part of the sisterhood. Ada, like herself, was alone. She bent over Ada and kissed her cheek.

Presently Ada sat up and dried her eyes.

"This is hard for you, too," she said. "Grace is so dear to you."

"Oh," Janet shuddered, "I can't believe this! It doesn't seem possible that he—"

Ada laughed shortly.

"You talk as if you are amazed because Harrison Ryder has not some kind of evil markings on his outside," she said. "You needn't be too hard on him. Power in as unlimited quantities as he has it is bad for a man."

Janet shook her head.

"Character—character, whatever the temptation is," she said, firmly.

"You've never been tempted," Ada replied.

Janet's face contracted. She had begun to feel what this must mean to Grace. She understood now, as she had never let herself understand before, why behind all her cousin's light, mocking manner there was the note

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of sadness, of longing. She knew why Grace's love for her children had a peculiar poignant intensity, and why she flung herself into the various intellectual interests that came her way. Ah, well, nearly every woman was unsatisfied unless she had love in her life. Janet should be the exception.

"Ah, I can't understand how he could stop loving Grace!" she said to Ada. "It isn't as if she had any of the faults in love I used to have when I was engaged to Mark Gregory. She hasn't been too unrestrained in giving, and she hasn't demanded too much. If she had done anything—"

"A woman doesn't have to 'do' anything," Ada said. "It's safer not to blame any one; to say that things just happen. And Harrison hasn't stopped loving Grace. Really," she added, impatiently, "young as you are, you ought to know that Harrison might love her very sincerely and permanently and still be capable of—episodes."

Janet compressed her lips. To her forthright mind it was possible only to have a man completely, or not to have him at all. To have him only partially, to know that there were questions one must not ask him, or oneself, to know that one's security of happiness lay only in ignorance—that was a situation Janet would have found more unendurable than seeing him belong entirely to another woman.

She said to Ada in rather a cold tone:

"Is it your sense of morality that has been offended, or merely your taste?"

Janet was extremely disturbed. Her exhilaration had departed. She was resentful of this obtrusion of sex into the impersonal life she had chosen, and in which she had been feeling so exultant. She added to her shocked sense of Ryder's enormity of conduct an irritation that Ada should have been able to inspire it; an irritation that Wilson loved her, and that she had ever loved Gregory. Yet she listened eagerly for Ada's answer.

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Ada had intended not to answer, but, seeing Janet's intent face, she leaned back on her pillows and tried to formulate her views.

"Oh, I don't know how to put it, Janet," she said, wearily. "If it came to a case of my own life I shouldn't want the double standard applied. I don't exactly believe in it for anybody. I think men ought to be faithful to their wives; but the laws and society give them a better chance not to be than women ever get. Many a woman who wouldn't admit it really would be capable of an episode, and want her beloved husband, too. Only, I believe, men as a sex have such inclinations more frequently than women. I don't know whether it's biology or training that causes it. And I'm too tired to preach; this thing has shaken me."

Again Janet bent over her and took her hands.

"Dear Ada," she murmured, "I can't tell you how sorry I am that this has happened to hurt you."

"It isn't going to hurt me long," Ada said. "What hurts me is Grace; I feel as if I'd been guilty of a treachery to her, and yet I know I haven't."

Ada paused and then went on:

"I've got to a point, Janet, where no man can hurt me for more than a few minutes at a time. That means that I don't need men. A woman is free only when she does arrive at that point. I got to it by fighting the sex-impulse every inch of the way. It's not a victory at which one arrives all at once."

Janet gazed at her with parted lips, marveling that Ada's experience had been so like her own. Ada, too, had seen that the only way to be free was not to want a man's love. Yet she felt superior to Ada—sympathetically so, but still superior, because Ada had been obliged to fight so long for her victory. Janet had hers already; and she was only twenty-three! She compressed her lips. Life should never be allowed to have the measure of victory over her that it had had over Ada and Grace.

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Ada turned impatiently on her pillows.

"It's not only that I hate the whole nasty experience," she said; "but it means upsetting all my plans. I can't stay here, but I'm as fond of luxury as a cat is of a warm corner. Oh, if only I had money!"

Janet was thinking of Grace again, wondering if her money could be any consolation in the face of her husband's disloyalties. Her sentimentality cried, "no"; but a hard little voice of common sense rose up in her and told her that Grace's money must mean some consolation, for it spelled power. If she had not the power to keep her husband absolutely to herself, at least she had the power of buying herself any other influence she wanted. She was one of the leaders in the suffrage work, not primarily because of her ability, but because of her position and money. Janet remembered something Grace had said to her at the time she was grieving over Gregory.

"The fact that other people suffer in just the same way as you do and from just the same cause is really a great moral support. Broken hearts are almost as common as babies, and the babies grow up and the broken hearts mend."

Doubtless Grace would find her philosophy a staff if not a crutch, Janet mused. Ada went on with her own line of thought.

"All this happened while Grace was out, late this afternoon. I went to bed, and when she came up to see me, I said I had a headache. I don't see how she can know, but Grace is uncanny in her divinations—"

"She won't let herself know," said Janet, with sudden insight. "Grace has got the power of setting a door nearly shut whenever she wants to. She can't close it absolutely, but she can get it so far to that it blurs all the sights and deadens the sounds behind it."

"That's just Grace," agreed Ada. "I must go, Janet. I don't know where—but where I sha'n't see him or her, either, for a while."

JANET MAKES A DECISION

Janet felt tired. The fire had died down to a broken, irregular heap of ashes, with a faint coral heart. Outside they could hear the occasional mellow call of a motor-horn. The wind was high, and over all other sounds crashed the irregular rhythm of the waves against the shore.

Suddenly Janet realized that she, too, did not want to see Harrison Ryder again. She shrank from the thought of his solid figure, his raucous laugh, his face with the full, satisfied eyes, and the expression which meant that men and time could deny him nothing. He had been good to her, but this new knowledge of him canceled all obligations. She felt a passion of loyalty toward Grace, whom he had hurt, and yet in that moment she was conscious of a sense of separation from Grace.

As she sat there, silently looking into the dead ashes, she was aware of a sense of alienation from all the Ryder household, from Grace's world. What place had she in it? The magnificent houses, the perfectly trained serving-men, the courteous friends of Grace—for the moment they all seemed to be combining to say to her:

"You don't belong to us really! You are here because of your cousin. We accept your entrance because we like you. You are young and vivid, and you amuse us. But you have no house of your own, no money, and your position is borrowed by virtue of your connection with the Ryders'. The only way you can really belong to us is to marry one of us."

Janet shook her head. She had no desire to marry a Harrison Ryder. She went to the window, drew the blind, and looked out. In front of her raged the dark lake. Up and down the street sat the lone row of splendid houses which accepted her on suffrance. The street-lights revealed their closed, reserved faces. Janet stared out silently.

No, it was not her inevitable environment. She wanted a place of her own. A little terror struck her; the vague

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doubt came back whether she would always be content to spend her life in the cause of women. Grace, with her money, ought indeed to find satisfaction there. Grace was the organizer who could plan the phases of the Chicago expression of the movement, bring from various quarters of the nation well-known speakers, get money from other rich women for the campaign in the states where there was a chance of modifying the laws to include woman suffrage. Even Charters agreed that Grace was doing a creative work.

Janet turned around at a sudden sound and movement. Ada was weeping wildly.

"I—I can't," she sobbed. "I am too discouraged to begin over alone."

Janet knelt down beside her. For a little while she did not speak. She had a sudden vision of Grace in the nursery, standing by the beds of her children. She knew what the expression on Grace's face must have been.

"Ada," she said, with sudden illumination, "what Grace wants more than anything else in the world is Harrison Ryder. I'll go away, too! If they are together—if no outsider is with them—it may be easier."

Ada ceased sobbing, and listened with long intakes of breath.

"I'll go with you. We'll be somewhere together. I shall like being with you," Janet said.

XXIV

THE BAPTISM OF FIRE

THE next morning Janet went to Grace's sitting-room. Remembering the nights she had passed after she had lost Gregory, she wondered what Grace's night had been. But her cousin was sitting at her desk, writing notes, with a composed face. If Janet had been an acute observer she would have noticed that the bunch of flowers which was Harrison Ryder's daily gift lay thrust at the bottom of her waste-basket.

"Whither away?" asked Grace, in her mocking tone. "What are you going to do for the world this morning? Sit down, dear."

"Very little," said Janet, sitting on the arm of a chair. Grace waited; Janet had not quite been able to make her manner casual.

"You remember Mr. Charters, of course?" she asked.

"Ah, the big Newfoundland-puppy young man who holds me responsible for the submerged tenth," said Grace.

"Not quite as bad as that," laughed Janet. "He scolds me, too. He keeps telling me that I'm out of place over here with you; that I'll never be able to do anything for the cause unless I'm willing to do it for the people behind the cause, and that I'll never understand people behind the cause as long as I live on the North Shore Drive, where I'm guarded and muffled."

Grace raised her eyebrows.

"I wish everybody could be guarded and muffled," she said. "That's what Mr. Charters is working for, isn't

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it? I've never believed in seeking for discipline in this world."

Janet was silent for a moment, wondering how she could best say what was in her mind. She plunged into it directly.

"I've spoken to you of that community of interesting people who live on the West Side in the Harrowgate Apartments where Mr. Charters is, and where the Wilsons are going? There's one flat which can be sublet. I think I'll telephone Mr. Charters this morning that Ada and I will take it. She wants to try some new work; she's restless. As for me, I think a bachelor maiden, working for the cause, and meeting Tom, Dick, and Harry, ought to have her own diggings."

Janet had spoken with her eyes at the level of Grace's forehead. She was relieved that the words were out, but she was sure they had been awkward. Suddenly, without a word having passed between them, she felt that her cousin understood her, and thanked her. She moved over to the footstool at Grace's feet, sat on it, and leaned her head against her cousin's knee. Grace softly stroked her hair, and Janet could feel that the hand trembled.

"This will always be your home when you want to come back, dear," Grace said, gently.

After a time Janet said, brokenly:

"It's such a big world—and every now and then something happens that makes me feel how ignorant I am, and perhaps defective in sympathy. I think if I were to go away and live among the very poorest people, the industrial units whose work, so Mr. Charters says, has produced us, why, perhaps I could do better my own part. Last night, as I was thinking things over, I knew it was *my* work I cared about rather than just helping. That's where the emphasis still lies."

It was Grace's opinion that that was where the emphasis always would lie. But she only stroked Janet's hair softly, and said:

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"Growing-pains of the soul, Janet."

Janet laughed a little. Then she said, as casually as she could:

"I've a note from Ada. She has to go to St. Louis to give a report at a convention there. She's really had very little vacation, judging from what she told me. In New York they were always getting her to do something."

"Ada cannot say 'no' very easily; she lets herself be imposed on," Grace remarked.

In spite of herself her tone was a little hard. But presently she again began to stroke Janet's hair, and she said:

"If you're really going, you must let me furnish the place for you. I've heaps of things here that no one will ever use."

Having seen Wilson's quarters, Janet knew something of the apartment she was going to, and the two began to discuss furnishings. Very soon, such is the merciful facility of human interests, they were both really absorbed in their planning.

That afternoon Janet went over to the West Side to see the apartment. Charters had received her proposal enthusiastically, and had invited her to meet her future companions in Blair's rooms at tea. Blair was away for a week, but his rooms were always used as a general gathering-ground. Some famous Russians were to be present, and all the residents were coming home early to meet them. Charters assured Janet that every one would be as glad as he was that she and Ada were coming.

As Janet jolted westward on the street-car she looked out at the streets which she had seen several times now. She was very much a spectator of those streets. She had tried to define the people on them. At times she felt a mystery in their mediocre, sordid lives; a crowd of men and women made her think of a dark ocean with tides of mute sorrows. The vibrations of their stress or pain beat on her senses. Again she felt no mystery, but was

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thrilled by the very commonplaceness of everything, the inevitableness and the casualness of daily living, the great pageantry of ordinary routine. There were times when she was repelled by the nakedness with which these people treated life. They stripped off all delicacies, shore away all that she had regarded as necessary refinements. There was something painfully blunt in the way they regarded facts—the price of eggs, child-bearing, the practice of flamboyant funerals. Janet wondered how much of it was due to the lack of sense of privacy, and how much was due to the directness of those who knew only facts, and but few of those, had but few experiences, and took them all simply at their face value.

As Janet mounted the stairs of the Harrowgate Apartments a stream of sound trickled down—fused voices and the rattle of tea-cups; no laughter, she noted. Guided by the sound, she reached an apartment on the fourth floor, where the door stood open. She saw a few thin groups of people, against high-colored walls partly hidden by bookcases. She smiled at the naïve consistency with which Blair had achieved the socialist color.

Charters was hovering near the door watching for her. “Come in,” he called, welcomingly; “come in and meet the crowd.”

Most reformers and artists and free lances of sorts have a tendency at some time or other to try communistic living. It is frequently only a temporary desire; but it is sure to be enriching while it lasts. It may be due to the fact that reformers and artists alike want to be with people who are in sympathetic agreement with them. The reformers crave agreement in ideas and conduct, while the artists want agreement in feeling. The residents of the Harrowgate Apartments were all under middle age, and some of them were as young as Janet. They were more or less still furnished with illusions, and for the most part very well pleased with each other.

Charters led her over to the tea-table and introduced

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her to Mrs. Underwood, a fair-haired, tired-looking woman, who was pouring tea, and to her husband, an equally tired-looking, thin-haired man, who seemed willing to welcome Janet, but not till he had eaten his cake and got all the chocolate off his fingers by the most expeditious route. They both wrote, Mrs. Underwood doing brusque forthright stories of the lower middle classes, and welcoming with joy any comment on her work which implied that the mantle of O. Henry was descending upon her; her husband writing gentle sentimental things which he believed in as he wrote them, and hated when they were finished, because they were so unlike what Conrad would have given the world.

Mrs. Underwood being busy with the samovar, and her husband absorbed in his cake, Charters signaled to a young man with fiery eyes and round red cheeks, who was talking to a tall, bony woman with an ample, kindly smile and sharp, curious eyes.

"He's Paul Winter, an assistant on the socialist paper here," explained Charters, quickly; "a vegetarian, and quite mad on the subject, but a fine chap. I say 'but' because I eat meat myself. She's Katherine Shepherd, a factory inspector. We call her the 'Good Shepherd' because she tries to herd into the right way all of us who will bear it."

The two approached and expressed their pleasure that Janet was coming to join their community. Then Miss Shepherd plunged back into an account of some special abuses in a factory she had visited that day, while Winter took notes of what she said, his fiery eyes glittering and leaping.

"He'll be burnt out in ten years," Charters murmured, as they moved away.

"But at least he's living," Janet said.

Her eyes were sparkling. She began to feel that a good deal more would happen in this communistic style of living than ever happened in the Ryder house.

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"I see Miss Riborsky over there," Janet said. "I think I'd like to go and speak to her."

As they were making their way across the room they were stopped by a couple whom Charters introduced as Mr. and Mrs. Hunter. They had the same interested look which Miss Shepherd and Winter and Charters wore, and the same dullness of complexion, as if the dusty air had taken the life from their skin, even if it could not from their eyes. They exhibited a bracelet which Mrs. Hunter was wearing, and which they had made. They pointed out its merits with the greatest pride.

"Won't you take it?" Mrs. Hunter asked, simply, unfastening the bracelet. "I think it belongs to you."

"Oh—thank you, I couldn't," cried Janet, flushing.

"You will when you know us better," Mrs. Hunter said, placidly.

Charters explained afterward that the Hunters did strange carving and made bizarre jewelry which they gave away, because they had enough money to live on, and it was their theory that sheer beauty ought not to be paid for. Charters remarked that two opinions existed as to whether their work represented sheer beauty. Janet hoped that not many of her new comrades would pursue their individuality so embarrassingly as the Hunters did.

She sat by Sonya Riborsky while Charters pointed out to her close to a dozen teachers and settlement-workers and students, who all sought the light, or else, possessing it already, were engaged in flashing it wherever possible across the paths of other people.

After a time the Russian guests of honor departed, some of the residents went to their own flats, and the shrunken circle drew together for intimate talk. Janet, sitting by Sonya, thought it was brilliant. For a little time it dealt with plutocrats and the proletariat, graft, pull, the solidarity of labor, class-consciousness, and the growing strength of the "Independent Workers of the World." Janet for-

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got she had no vote, and felt like a citizen. Then the talk flitted to some great happenings of the nation that seemed to have nothing to do with labor or the classes, and yet always the cause of these happenings was traced back to some inequality between the rich and the poor, and the belief was expressed that when the laborer owned his own tools, and had a proper control over the industries he created, only then would the disjointed world be set right. At last the talk drifted into gossip, and Janet turned to Sonya.

She had been struck afresh with Sonya's beauty as the girl had followed the talk. Her reddish-brown eyes had been sometimes keen and sometimes inscrutable, and sometimes glowing with a stern kind of emotion. Her dark chestnut hair, worn like a coronet, to-day seemed to Janet almost to bear a resemblance to the crown of the Man of Sorrows. Her face was colorless, except for the vivid hue of her lips, and yet it was so full of expression that it suggested color. Charters had told Janet something of her story. Her family had been very poor, and from the time she was five years old she had done home-finihing. At ten she had been taken from school and put to work in a sweat-shop. But she had had an insuperable desire for knowledge, and she had gone to night school. By the time she had got a machine in the factory of Levy, Schwartz and Guyon she had begun to study stenography. After she had got a position as a stenographer she had begun to study law, and she was even now preparing for her final examinations. Her face had been expressive as she had listened to the talk, silent, never losing anything, turning over in her mind, with true Russian-Jewish seriousness, all that was said, arguing mentally where she disagreed. Sonya had at times all the volubility of her race, but some of this group had been her teachers; some of them had helped her family out of its difficulties, and gratitude gave her a deference not always shared by her mind. Janet felt deeply interested

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in this girl, chiefly because of the glimpse she had once inadvertently seen of Sonya's heart. She wondered if time had helped her. She recognized in Sonya a tenacity quite equal to her own.

Charters, who was on the other side of Janet, leaned forward and spoke to Sonya.

"Bit tired to-day?" he asked.

"Maybe so," she answered, dropping her eyes that she might not show her pleasure at his care for her. "I was over by my brother's. I get tired out trying to talk sense to my sister-in-law. She had a scare that his arm would stay weak; she's sick, anyway, and easy scared."

Janet was only half listening. For some reason she had begun to think of Wilson, and the scant little smile that was occasionally on her lips when she remembered that he loved her had slipped into its place. She was thinking that she would be glad to take her place among these people, glad to see Wilson when he came back, and she murmured the lines:

"I am the master of my soul,
I am the captain of my fate."

Charters was responding to Sonya's remark.

"What's the matter with your brother's arm? Did he get hurt?" he asked.

"He didn't get hurt. Didn't you read it in the papers yesterday and to-day? One of the doctors in a hospital wanted a pint of blood from the veins of a strong, healthy man. He would give fifty dollars for it. Anton says there were eighty men, but they took him. He and my sister were awful glad."

Something seemed to snap in Janet's mind. She looked at the people about her in a hard, detached way. What were they? Chiefly talkers, and in their talk was the queerest mixture of what was large and idealistic with what was personal and petty. A few did more than talk; they worked out their ideals in unselfish practice. But

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most of them seemed to her little people who posed, and whom the world would never hear of. Perhaps they posed so they could at least hear themselves. There were the Hunters, who, Charters said, believed in endowed motherhood and thought children should be brought up in institutions; to be consistent they were letting a grandparent bring up their child. Janet heard something Underwood was saying, quite conscious of the literary and human value of the remark.

"Any price is a cheap one to pay which makes the passion of your life more vivid."

"Word, words," thought Janet.

She turned to Charters and spoke passionately, with tears in her eyes.

"Oh," she cried, "the 'master of my soul, captain of my fate' business sounds like the uplift column of a yellow newspaper when one hears of eighty men falling over one another struggling to be the first to sell a pint of their blood. When a man has to open his veins, how far can he be captain of his fate? I don't feel as if I could stand it!"

Sonya glanced at her curiously; Charters stared. Janet got up and looked out of the window. She might have reflected that all over the world men and women of all classes and conditions were bartering vital energy for some price or other. But she could see only a battalion of men trying to sell their blood for money. Her tears fell, and she stared fixedly down into the street. It was Saturday night, and there was much traffic. The unfused noises beat upward in strident, jangling clamor. Heavy beer-wagons and coal-trucks passed, the drivers jouncing clumsily on their seats. The door of the corner saloon swung back and forth as men and women and children entered and came out with cans. The meat market and the grocery store were filled with gesticulating figures, bright-skirted or gaily shawled, and bounded on all sides by swarming children.

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Again she thought of Sonya's brother selling his blood, of Sonya giving up her money and energy to help her own class. Beside theirs, her own life seemed unreasonably free, her own hard wish to be strong in herself and independent of people a selfish wish. She realized that for all her desire to identify herself in some work beneficial to women, she had tried to be only a spectator in life, in order that she might be safe. Safe—the selfishness of seeking safety! At last she knew she was definitely throwing in her lot with the people.

The tears blurred her eyes, and then, strangely, she had a hallucination. Very clearly she saw Wilson, and he was looking at her tenderly, welcomingly, and he was saying: "You've had your baptism of fire to-night, Janet."

Book III
THE WINGED CREATURE

XXV

A BROKEN TIE

JANET stood at the window of the little living-room of her new apartment looking for Ada's cab. Ada had not seen the new home, and Janet felt at once the zest of the creator and the discoverer. Behind her the soft rugs, rich hangings, beautiful furniture cheated the eye into believing itself miles away from Halsted Street. But Janet, from her vantage-point at the window, had no such illusion.

Her sense of fellowship was constantly growing for the neighbors at whom she was looking, the little atoms born forever out of the sunlight, and who yet in their shadow-land reproduced as faithfully as they could the motions of a free life. Their living overflowed into the street. In the mean little doorways opposite her Janet saw women passing to and fro. There were some, early mothers and early gone to flesh; there were others, too soon withered and shrunken. They were neat or untidy, relaxed, laughing or quarreling, and always ready to stop and watch the drama of the street. Nothing escaped them—certainly not Janet, viewing them from her window.

A little Jewish boy came hastening from around the corner at a nervous trot. He stood at the window of a delicatessen shop, with ten cents held firmly in his teeth. He pressed his little, dark nose against the glass, evidently balancing the problem of choosing between four eggs and a roll of sausage. A few weeks before Janet's interest in him would have been purely from the head. But to-day she was resenting almost passionately that the child

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should so soon be burdened with the responsibility of spending. She could be tolerant now of old women who bought coal by the half-sack, and who wasted a little windfall of money on out-of-season vegetables.

Janet knew as she stood there that many a time she would long for the softness of her life in Grace's home. She did not like poverty and ugliness; she shrank esthetically from coming so intimately in contact with the stark facts of life. Yet she felt that a constant reading of the small print of sorrow and poverty would help her to keep the sturdiness of soul which must be her constant armor if she was to do adequate work in the world. Ada, she feared, was coming to her new home a little wearied, a little unhopeful, as to a place from which she would doubtless continue the eternal voyaging which never seemed to carry her to any secure place of mooring. But Janet felt that here, more than anywhere else, she could be her own woman, exercise her free soul. Before this time, she told herself, when she had laboriously tried to weave the thread of her life into other lives it had slipped loose; but now the thread was caught into a great pattern which time would teach her to read.

Ada's cab drew up before the apartment-house. The women in the doorways opposite stopped talking and stared. The proprietor of the delicatessen shop leaned into his window and peered out through the soiled glass, his fat hand impinging on a plate of rolls. A flock of tousled, beautiful children scurried across the road and stood gazing at Ada as she dismounted, clustering as near her as they dared. The largest of them seized her suit-case and staggered with it to the entrance. The other children waited, eager little cormorants, for a share in the pennies which they knew would be forthcoming.

Janet stood at the head of the stairs, a glowing, welcoming vision. Ada entered and looked at the living-room with a sigh of relief.

"It's lovely," she said. "I was half afraid. These

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streets are so dreadful, and, even though this building itself is good, it makes me think of a flower covered with dust. But it's charming inside."

Janet showed Ada her bedroom, and came back to the living-room again aglow with the pleasant sensation of having a home of her own. As she went to close the front door Blair came down the main stairs. He stopped in amazement at seeing her. As he stood there she was struck afresh with the force of his personality, with the charm of the irregular line of his black hair, and the widely slanted black eyes, and the long angle of the eyebrows.

"Good heavens, am I dreaming!" he said, taking her hand heartily in his. "I've just this moment got back from New York, and here I find you!"

His tone was as pleased as it was intimate. Janet did not mind either the pleasure or the intimacy. She assumed that intimacy was what one might expect in community life.

"Come in," she said, opening the door wide. "Yes; we're living here."

"Who is 'we'?" he asked, entering.

Ada opened her door. Her eyes and Blair's met. "You!" she cried, and at the same moment he said, "You, Ada!"

Ada came forward slowly and leaned her hand for support on the back of a chair. Janet noticed that the hand was shaking. She had averted her eyes from Ada's face, for she read too much there. That fixed look meant at least a memory that scorched. Janet did not glance at Blair, but she had caught the curious tone in his voice. It meant astonishment, interest, and perhaps a certain appreciation of the dramatic quality of this meeting.

"I'll go down and speak to the janitor about your trunk, Ada," Janet said. She was quite sure that Ada did not hear her, scarcely knew she was going; but she felt that Blair was following her with his eyes.

When the sound of Janet's footsteps had died away,

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Ada moved blindly a pace and sat down. She drew her lips into a thin line, and covered her eyes with her hand. Blair watched her, his expressive face disturbed.

"I'm sorry to upset you," he said, rather huskily.

"A ghost—one doesn't see a ghost unmoved," Ada said.

Blair sat down in a chair opposite her; then he got up and stood over by the window, looking out into the street. He returned to the chair and rested on its arm. Then, as if this attitude showed him as too negligent, as wanting in the proper state of feeling, he sat down again and creaked uneasily from side to side.

Ada laughed shortly. "You always did try to live up to a situation, Charles," she said, wearily. "I'm not so upset as you may imagine. Simply, I never expected to see you again. I'd quite buried you. When you went West you said you'd never come back."

"Yes, I know," Blair returned; "I'd no business to say that. It's against my creed always to make a promise I'm not sure I'll be able to keep. But you seemed to think—"

"Oh, I know," Ada said. "I didn't want you to come back. And seeing you so unexpectedly—no one is ever quite able to keep memories underground, Charles."

The window was a little open, and the noises of the street rose stridently. A heavy beer-wagon thundered by; Blair could tell it was a beer-wagon by the rumbling of the casks as the wheels jolted over the brick-paved road. Some children were quarreling, and their angry, loud voices floated up, insistent, dominating. Somewhere in the building a woman was laughing. Ada thought of the strange lack of homogeneity of human experience—so many different streams of it, running side by side, eternally different.

"Did you know I was here? Did you come to see me?" Ada asked.

"I didn't know you were here. It was an utter sur-

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prise to find you," Blair said. "Didn't Miss Bellamy tell you I was here?"

"Miss Bellamy! Do you know Janet?" asked Ada, her voice slightly sharp.

"I've known her ever since she was a little girl. I've met her several times casually since I came back last autumn." Blair was wondering, with a slight touch of wounded vanity, why Janet had never spoken of him to Ada. It did not occur to him to reflect that she had never spoken of Ada to him. Ada, for her part, knew Janet's habit of absorption, of concentration. She had never mentioned Blair because he had never happened to be in her mind when she was with Ada.

"I suppose you know Charters and Wilson, since she does," Blair ruminated. "It's a wonder they didn't speak of me."

Ada lifted her eyebrows at the intimacy of the "she." Then she dismissed the thought. Janet was frank; if she and Blair were real friends, she would have mentioned the fact to Ada.

"I haven't seen Mr. Charters or Mr. Wilson for more than a moment or two since the early autumn," she said.

Blair creaked uneasily in his chair. "Then you don't know that I have a flat in this building?" he asked.

Ada shook her head. "No; I didn't know."

Blair sighed impatiently; he got up and crossed to the window. The quarrel of the children had been settled; the twilight was beginning, and some lamps had begun to shine in the houses. He came back to his chair.

"If you want me to, Ada," he offered, "I'll move away from here. It would take some explaining, of course, but I guess I could manage that."

"It's very considerate of you to offer, Charles," Ada said, "but it isn't at all necessary. You're taking this quite too seriously. It was only seeing you unexpectedly that disturbed me. Why should either of us change our arrangements and give rise to no end of speculation

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or questioning?" She laughed rather maliciously, and added: "Isn't it rather sentimental of you to suggest it? You know you were always inveighing against me for sentimentality."

A dull red glowed under the brown of Blair's cheek. Ada knew that he was struggling against irritability.

"I hope you aren't being sentimental on my account," went on Ada, mercilessly, "because I assure you I can meet you without any emotion whatever."

Blair made an effort at self-control. "If you can it's not at all like you, Ada," he said, quietly.

"No; it's more like you," she retorted. She had leaned forward in her chair, and a red spot of color glowed in her cheeks.

"If we're going to meet without any emotion whatever," he reminded her, nastily, "getting angry is a bad way of beginning."

For a moment she looked indignantly at him. Then she laughed. There was something in her laugh that disconcerted Blair. Ada stood up and went over by the bookcase, whence she looked at him. He almost felt as if she were seeing him for the first time.

"I know how it is, Charles," she said, gleefully. "I was falling into my old way—and so were you. I couldn't see you come into the room without feeling it—one way or another. I couldn't help wanting to make you angry. My old way would have been to feel sorry you were angry, and a little afraid, and to try to get into your good graces again." She came to him with outstretched hands. "Shake hands with me, Charles. I don't care whether I'm in your good graces or not. It's all nothing to me. No; it's not quite nothing. It's delightful to know that you don't matter."

She looked at him with sparkling eyes, as of one making an unexpected and gratifying discovery. Blair's disconcertedness grew stronger. He would have denied that he was disconcerted; he merely supposed he was un-

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comfortable because his appearance had upset Ada. But he was aware of a vagueness, a sense of something lost. What had happened to him was the sudden knowledge that some territory had been retrieved of which he had thought himself the master.

Ada sat down again with a new expression of competence and satisfaction. She was reflecting that what she had said to Janet about not needing men was quite true. She did not need even Charles Blair, whom she had once informed high heaven that she could not and would not live without. She smiled at Blair with a detachment and sweetness that thoroughly exasperated him.

Janet returned with an expressman at her heels bearing Ada's heavy trunk. She led the way into Ada's bedroom, and he slowly stooped sideways, easing the load from his back. Janet's face was contracted; her muscles ached as she watched him. When he had straightened up with a long sigh, she said, indignantly:

"Why doesn't the man who employs you send two people to carry a heavy trunk like that?"

The young expressman smiled at her cheerfully. "Because he don't have to, lady, see? My back's a sight. My mother has to rub vaseline on it for me every night. The way the boss looks at it, I don't have to take the job if I don't want to. Neither I don't, if I'd rather jump off the dock. So he figures we're both suited."

Janet was so sympathetic over his lot that she forgot to tip him. He smiled at that, too, and strode off downstairs whistling.

When Janet entered the living-room, with a fine appearance of unconsciousness, Ada said:

"So you've known Mr. Blair even longer than I have, Janet? He and I are old friends."

"So old," Blair said, "and so good that I'm sure we knew each other in some previous incarnation."

Janet had a fair share of curiosity, which occasionally struggled with her ideals of good form. She divined some-

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thing unusual in the atmosphere of those two, a subtle antagonism, and an equally subtle attraction. She realized that Blair's robust magnetism was of the sort that would appeal to Ada. Indeed, most men, women, and children would turn to Blair with a smile. She had no doubts of him as a lawyer and as a lover of the people. It was Janet's conviction, however, that Ada invariably selected for her favor the most undependable man in a company, because he was sure to be the most charming; and that was because he was not always self-controlled, not always editing himself, and was, therefore, more vital than the average person.

"So here you are," Blair said to Janet, as she seated herself beside Ada. "Here you are, to meet the problems."

"Oh, problems!" cried Janet, with the air of one who gives them up.

Blair took the attitude of the master instructing the pupil. "You are in the first—no, the second stage of the reform fever," he said; "you see that much has to be done, and you are maddened because you have not a thousand hands, are only one person. Also, you have a consuming amazement that every one else doesn't feel exactly as you do, and hasn't come pelting down here to do something for the race."

Janet laughed and blushed.

"All you can do for any one down here just now," he went on, "is just a little more than any neighbor would do. The time may come when you won't care even to do that."

"Take a cigarette, Charles," Ada said; "it will soothe you. By the way, I'm almost in the position of the other poor people here. I have to get a job."

"Ah," said Blair, crisply, "you can always get your secretary's job back, and Miss Bellamy has an allowance and a home of her own in Wisconsin. No one ever can be called poor till he has nothing between himself and want but his bare hands."

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"Bless me!" cried Ada. "You *are* in a preaching mood, Charles. Tell me about your work, instead."

He was nettled for a moment at her cool amusement. Then he took her at her word, and began to tell her about some of the cases he and Charters had undertaken. Janet noticed, as he talked, that he fell unconsciously into the manner one intimate comrade shows another. It was as if he were sure of Ada's deep interest and co-operation. Ada's response, also unconscious, was that of one who has the right to listen, with a hint of proud proprietorship. When they came to matters of ordinary interest their manner changed, Ada in particular showing a casualness, even a perfunctoriness, which seemed almost calculated.

After Blair had gone Janet fell to thinking of him and Wilson, both men of power, who had elected to cast in their lot with the disinherited. She turned to Ada, who was sitting by the table looking at a book, the leaves of which she was not turning.

"After all," Janet said, "the sort of man who convinces me most is one like Mr. Wilson, who began with the victorious of the world and of his own will goes over to the disinherited."

"Charles Blair could have been victorious if he had not chosen to side with the people," said Ada, with a slight air of defense.

They went to the settlement café for dinner. The burden of the conversation rested upon Janet, but when they returned to their apartment Ada left her silence. It was plain to Janet that the meeting with Blair had touched her deeply. She began to walk up and down the meager length of their living-room, talking, not of Blair, but of Ryder.

"Now that you are over here, close to the bare facts of life, Janet," she said, "you ought to look at things straight. It wasn't Harrison Ryder's proposal that shocked me—that is, if I could have divorced it from all thought of Grace. Why should a woman be horrified because a man

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asks her to live with him? It's done every hour of the day."

Janet had lately come to the stage of her experience when she longed to face facts, and the more disagreeable they were the more steadily she held her eyes. "What should a woman be horrified at, then?" she asked.

"Nothing that isn't really vulgar or cruel," Ada returned. "When a man like Ryder," went on Ada, still pacing up and down, "makes an irregular proposal to a woman like me, he wants more than body; he wants mind, spirit, charm. Such a man is like an employer of labor; he's got full power. He has money, wife, children, and then he wants another woman full of vitality. And the shame of it is that she's always poor, or he'd not dare make the proposal."

Janet considered. She could see the insolence of such a proposition to a woman with merely a hundred dollars a month. The only way a woman could meet such a man on equal terms would be to have beauty, money, power, and a profession.

"Oh, the dominant, successful male!" cried Ada. "How I hate his egotism and his power! A man like that is ruthless, because no one has ever been over him. If only he were poor and lonely, it would appeal to me. But he's so rich and successful, and he only wants to add the little drop I have to all he has. It isn't a fair exchange. He couldn't give me enough. What could he give me? You see, a man like that knows you need love, and he knows you haven't got it, and he believes your necessity is so great that he can make terms. You can't live without love. It's a question of being starved long enough to take anything he'll give."

"But one doesn't need to accept," Janet pointed out.

"Fortunately not, so long as you can still earn a hundred dollars a month. He says you would get as much out of it as he would. But he'd torment you. You'd love him, and that would surprise him. He'd give you

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nothing but passion. You'd be afraid to oppose him for fear of losing him. You'd have no life of your own. All your interests would break down. It would be terrible—terrible—" Ada's eyes were blazing, and her breath came heavily.

"But all this isn't an every-day situation," Janet reminded her; "it doesn't happen with the frequency of illness or death or privation—"

"A woman wants a home and protection," Ada stormed on. "Think of the little hidden flat, and the stolen visits, and the sneaking to a theater with the hope that no one will see you both, and pretending you don't mind the anomalous position! A couple needs friends, mutual interests. Men have the whip-hand of us, because we love more deeply, more passionately than they. I'd as soon live with a nice, intellectual wolf."

Janet felt herself being carried away by Ada's passion, and she steeled herself against it. If she were going to breast the world like a man, she must stem tides of feeling, even when they rose over a matter that was not personal. She felt a silly little glow of vanity that she could exercise more self-control than Ada, not quite understanding all Ada's grounds for feeling as she did.

"Our work doesn't sustain us as a man's does him," Ada said; "they think we are only bluffing when we say we care about work, and all such interests. They think we want only love."

"And by nature so we do," Janet said. "It's the business of this new generation of thinking women to train up girls so that they can have other interests besides love. It will be no loss to them when love really comes." Thus spoke the tyro, feeling that she herself was eminently capable of instructing the new generation.

Ada threw herself into a chair. "I'm tired out," she said, moodily. "I'd much better be considering what I'll do about a new position, instead of raging about men."

After Janet was in bed she called out to Ada: "Ada—

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is Mr. Blair—he used to be married when I was a little girl, and I think I heard that his wife left him.”

Ada hesitated a moment, and then said: “I think she’s still alive. She didn’t leave him; he left her. She wouldn’t give him a divorce.”

Janet blushed in the darkness. It could not be that Blair had made the same suggestions to Ada that Ryder had made! Then she resolutely determined not to think of Blair or Ada. At once her thought leaped to Wilson; how were he and Sallie faring in their honeymoon hours? She turned restlessly on her pillows; the concerns of lovers were no longer her concern.

XXVI

A RETURN

"SPRING insists on itself, even in the nineteenth ward," murmured Janet, at the window.

She saw no sign of green, heard no call of young birds. The sunlight glinted down, dust-laden, its pure gold tarnished. Yet here, too, spring claimed her kingdom and her subjects. The shop doors stood open, and many of the owners were coatless, serving their customers; or, lacking customers, they stood on their thresholds watching with not too much comprehension the eternal story of the street. Old women loosened their shawls to let the sun and the warm air get at their withered foreheads and throats. Old men stopped to talk with younger men, feeling a little resurgence of youth, a sense that after all they were not yet of the tottering generation, for had they not lived through another year? Middle-aged women and men remembered whatever life had brought them of joy or comfort or prosperity, with an obscure sense that those days were not so very far off, and that perhaps some miracle would bring back the time of happiness—only now the miracle would not take the form of sex; it would be due to some luck of steady work, some chance of increased wages, some good fortune accruing to son or daughter.

It was on the faces and bodies of the young that Spring pressed the mark of her scepter. Girls walked with a buoyancy and zest not belonging to their winter gait. Some of them wore their spring clothes, always an exaggeration of the prevailing styles. On they went in

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their unconscionably wide hats and high heels and low necks, their eyes the brighter, their glances the more conscious because of these lures with which Spring was reinforcing herself. Even when they wore their winter clothes their eyes bore bright spring glances, vaguely seeking something.

Young men walked before or behind or with these young girls, passed them, or met them, their own bodies alive with the sap of the spring. They looked frankly at the girls, but behind this open gaze there was also a vague, unconscious, wandering expression. They, too, were seeking something. They were all looking for romance. The more fortunate of them would find it; to nearly all of them it would come, if only for a brief stay. This romance is always compounded of equal parts of restlessness, high spirits, chase-and-quarry instinct, soul-and-body lure, and imagination; its full name is youth, and the best thing about it is that it is common. It lends its glorious democracy to all classes and races and creeds.

Janet felt it, but she had firmly translated it into fresh energy for her work. The spring had come as a surprise to her, for she had only that afternoon returned from a two weeks' tour in Wisconsin, where she had been explaining to farmers' wives the need of equal suffrage. In Wisconsin April had kept the face of winter, and Janet, always responsive to her environment, had forgotten that there could be any other season.

She turned away from the window, mindful of a talk she had to prepare for an imminent suffrage meeting. She was alone in the flat, Ada being in her new work in a near-by settlement. As Janet sat down to her business-like table she heard a tap on her door, and Blair entered with the air of one always sure of a welcome.

"How are you?" he greeted her, warmly. "I heard you moving about, and I thought I'd come and tell you about Sonya Riborsky. The poor child's mother died ten days ago. She's going to live here in Miss Shepherd's flat."

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"Ah," said Janet, in a low tone.

She marveled that she herself had been living two weeks, just like any other two that had preceded them, and yet that same stretch of time had brought so many changes to other people—illnesses and deaths, and births and weddings and imprisonments, and loss of work and gain of work which had changed, for good or ill, the direction of scores of lives. If the thought was banal, it was only so because this hourly miracle had become too commonplace for the world to stop its concerns in order to reflect.

Blair spoke almost affectionately.

"It's good to see you back. I've a book in my pocket for you. It's all about socialism and forbidden subjects."

Janet looked at him with a sense of irritation. Once or twice in their conversation he had approached the subject of the unyoked connections of men and women. She had always promptly changed the talk, but he had said enough to convince her that he sincerely believed that such relations were beautiful and even holy because of their freedom. She also had the impression that Blair considered it an enlightened duty to lay his views fully before her and, if possible, convert her. She had no interest in any such conversions. She rather cynically thought that the view of Blair was an easy one to assume because it made a man absolutely free while really binding a woman. But she did not mean to express her views. Whenever such subjects came up in general conversation, Janet was always a listener, and generally a listener with down-cast eyes.

"Really, Mr. Blair," she said, "I sha'n't promise to read your book."

"Really, Miss Bellamy," he replied, mockingly, "people who hope to do a real work in the world can't afford to have the *jeune fille* attitude. It's wasting time in the middle ages. Well, I'm off to sleep. Was up half the

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night keeping Jerry Lanigan from going out to tear down the Bridewell. Wild with drink again, and his wife wild with fear."

Whenever Blair irritated Janet he was almost sure to atone by some exhibition, usually unconscious, of the lovable, unegoistic side of himself.

After he had gone Janet turned to her work. She thought and wrote for an hour or two, and then searched her book-shelves for a volume from which she needed a quotation. The book was not to be found, and then she recalled that she had seen a copy on the shelves in Wilson's apartment. He had sent Blair and her the keys to his rooms; that was the only message Janet had had from him. She had gone into the rooms several times to borrow books, or to work when she wanted to be quiet and Ada had guests.

She went down-stairs and unlocked Wilson's door. Always the rooms seemed to her a little sad, even ghostly. Wilson had prepared them while he was still very much content with Sallie. A good many hopes and wishes had gone into the furnishing. Often Janet could see Sallie's little, piquant face and fragile figure in the darkened living-room. As she opened the door she wondered, as she so often had before, where Sallie and Wilson were. Had the honeymoon blotted out all other longings from Wilson's heart? Would he be perfectly happy to come back to his work with Sallie always beside him? Janet was not especially vain, and she remembered that she had been cured in a few months of her love for Gregory—a love which she had told him and herself was immortal. Doubtless Wilson did not think of her any more. And yet she hoped that when he came back they would be warm friends. Scarcely a day passed that she did not think about him, did not glow over the magnificent way he meant to spend himself and his money for the helpless.

She crossed the narrow hall into the living-room. The blinds were drawn, and as she went to draw them up she

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felt that she was not alone. Quickly she looked about. A man was sitting on a corner of the sofa in a listless attitude.

"What are you doing here? What do you want?" she called, sharply.

She pulled up a blind, and the light showed her that the man was Wilson. His face was sharp and worn; almost it seemed to her that the bright blue of his eye had faded. As he turned his head the thin, rugged line of his cheek showed strongly.

"It's you," he said, huskily. "I wondered who it was."

She knew that something had gone wrong with him, that he had been shocked to the core of his being. She held out her hand, and as he took it in both of his a look of relief crossed his face. It was almost the look that a child might have had, and it touched Janet profoundly. It was as if he had said to her that at last he was to have rest and comfort, some one to whom he could unburden himself, some one who would understand. But his words were:

"I am glad to see you; I am glad to see you." Then he looked about the little flat, and added, abruptly: "I don't believe I want to stay here just now. Can't we go up to yours? Blair wrote me you're living here."

When they were seated in her rooms, seeing that he was not yet ready to speak, she said: "I'll bring in some tea, and then we can talk." She went into the kitchen, returning presently with a tray. He rose to take it from her, and she was struck again with the beauty of his long stride, and the grace of his hands as he put down the tea-things. Glancing up at him as she handed him his cup, she noted again the heavy shadows under his eyes and the tense lines beside his mouth.

"What is it, Richard?" she asked, gently.

"It's poor little Sallie. She's very ill."

"Oh *no*!" breathed Janet.

"I'm afraid it's the end of our lives together, in any real sense," Wilson said, brokenly; "it's paralysis."

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"Oh *no!*" said Janet again. She thought with pain of Sallie's little, vivacious face, pale now with suffering, or perhaps drawn into some dreadful, still expression. How could Sallie bear the inactivity even for a little while? It would seem unbelievable to her that she should have this blow when she had just entered upon her married life.

"Is it—very bad?" she asked, softly.

"One side is paralyzed; she can move one hand and speak. They promise us a little hope, but when I remember her inheritance—"

"It isn't very good," agreed Janet; "but I have heard of some miraculous cures. Has it been—long?"

"A month ago," replied Wilson. "It came very suddenly. I am glad she had a few days of happiness. But how short—scarcely two months!"

He put down his cup and looked gloomily at Janet, not really seeing her. The beginning of his honeymoon had been a revelation to him. Behind Sallie's hard, pleasant little manner he had found a store of deep tenderness for him. All that was sweet and sound in her had concentrated into a little bloom of devotion for her husband. He did not know that its sweetness was largely due to the fact that she liked foreign travel and was having her own way entirely. Her response to Wilson's affection had been such that he had looked forward to their life together as by no means difficult. Work came first with him, and a woman second. If Sallie were not the woman he loved most, she was the woman he had promised to make into a companion.

"There isn't much I can say," Janet murmured, pitifully; "but at least I am glad that this came now, instead of before your marriage. Sallie will have happy memories."

Wilson passed his hand across his forehead. Yes; he had made her happy. Toward the end there had indeed been the implication that he was omitting something.

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At first Wilson's stricken conscience had supposed that she had somehow guessed that she was not receiving his full devotion. Later he had realized that it was not that; it was merely Sallie's injured sense that the life of travel in easy, foreign lands, this shining fashion of spending money, was not to last forever; some day he was going to drag her home to "the laborin' classes." He had half realized that the little person meant to try, some day, to lure him back to the paths of ease which had been his birthright, and which she considered should have been hers. But he had known his own hard power of resistance against all wiles, once his mind was made up.

He looked up at Janet with a wry smile. "She never quite wanted to come here, poor little Sallie," he said. "I didn't tell you where she is. It happened while we were still abroad. As soon as I had seen specialists enough to give up real hope, I brought her back to America. She's—she's in a hospital. That's her home, poor girl."

Janet shrank a little. She realized vividly the white hospital room, the perpetual presence of a uniformed nurse, the doctors, the medicine odors—all the measured living, the inescapable suggestion of an eternal sick-room. She pushed away the impression, and said to Wilson, hopefully:

"There are such wonderful cures made in America nowadays. We mustn't give up the belief that Sallie will have her home here yet. Until then you and I, and all of us, will make her home for her there at the hospital."

She was leaning toward him, her amber eyes warm with sympathy, her dark hair falling gently from her face like soft wings. Wilson took her hand, and for the moment he felt no emotion toward her but affectionate gratitude. A loyal sympathy for Sallie had pushed his more ardent feelings into the background. He let her hand go, and Janet asked:

"How is Sallie taking it?"

A flicker of pain crossed Wilson's face. "She didn't

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want to come back—asked me to put her into some hole to die. She says she hates the hospital. But where else could I bring her? It wouldn't be possible to put her into a house of her own."

"Oh no," agreed Janet. She thought, pitifully, that in any case a home would be impossible; that the luxurious house poor little Sallie doubtless pictured would become a hospital even if it were given her, precisely because she was in it. Janet realized the pathos of not being able to make a home for the man one loved.

"Of course, I have promised all sorts of things when she shall get well," Wilson said, wearily. "Perhaps patience will come to her later."

Janet guessed faintly at some of the wild, bitter things Sallie must have said—the poor little person who had always insisted on planning her own life, and reacted so heavily if she did not like a fact! Then her mind went back to Wilson.

"And you?" she asked.

"I can't stay in the hospital, of course. I shall live here. I'll need the work I have arranged to do more than ever now. Yes, Janet, this is home."

He went to the window of the living-room, and she stood beside him. Twilight had begun to fall; the residents of the street, their evening meal over, had come to the windows and doorways, relaxed, unbraced, calling to one another, and to the children playing by the curbstones. The grocery-man from across the way was taking in some of his vegetables from the wide window-board which extended half across his sidewalk. The light poured over his bald head and stooping form. A vivacious Italian hurried up to make a purchase, and Janet watched the animated gestures of the two, which advertised the course of their bargaining. They were putting all their energy into a dispute over a penny or two, and yet perhaps life had dealt them experiences as wry as that which had come to Wilson. No one was absolutely safe from

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life. The only remedial medicine was to value the things which could be replaced, if taken away, and to reduce one's capacity for emotion.

"I shall never understand life," she said to Wilson; "never! never!"

He made no reply. They stood together, looking out into the thickening darkness.

Janet looked at him with a quiet rush of sympathy. She had tried to restrain her feelings when he had first told her about Sallie. She had not wanted even Wilson to break down any of the hard strength she had been building up in herself. Not even for him did she wish to be personal. At the moment that restraint seemed petty.

"I'm sorry," she murmured to him; "sorry from my heart that you have been hurt. Will you let me help?"

"You have helped me already," he said, with a frank, steadfast look. "You, and only you, will make this thing tolerable."

She met his eyes freely. His love for her, she thought, was as if it had never been, neutralized by this tragedy of Sallie, which would always be a barrier to any faithless thought. Why could she not let herself have with Wilson what she had of late come to wish for—frank and free comradeship with a man? Blair's remarks on the relationship of the sexes had given her thoughts that turn. Such a deep friendship was possible only if some irrefragable barrier were erected. It was surely here in this case. Paradoxically, all barriers of the spirit would be down, and yet an immovable one would be present. Indeed, there was a double barrier between herself and Wilson—not only his inevitable obligation to Sallie, but her own determination never to love again. Beyond the barrier was the real friendship that had existed between them, that had grown stronger until that night when Wilson discovered that he loved her. That weakness was gone now; only an increasing strength should be left.

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He and she should walk together in real comradeship. She was to have the only personal gift she asked of life—and a gift that should leave her safe.

Impulsively she gave her hands to Wilson. And in the street below them spring was taking toll of all their neighbors—spring and life—and Janet was sure she was exempt.

XXVII

THE POOR LITTLE PERSON

JANET entered the broad doors of the hospital with the shrinking which many healthy people have for an institution of that sort. She knew that acceptance of physical pain was as logical as the acceptance of poverty. Yet at least the poverty had its gleams of hope along with the other concomitants of life. But sickness housed within suggestive walls seemed too unnatural; she could not realize that it would evolve into health.

Her journey to the hospital to see Sallie had been pleasant enough, for she had been reliving the events of the night before. She had been thinking over what Wilson had told her of his plans—the work he was to do for the ten-hour law for women; his chairmanship on the minimum-wage committee; the municipal lodging-houses he hoped to endow; his vague hopes of a vocational school for boys and for girls—all the many palliatives he wanted to help provide.

"I'm not sure that any of them is right," he had told her; "the capitalists with their notions of not stirring things up, and the socialists with their theories of vital reconstruction, would both disagree with me. My plans may not aid in any real evolution whatever. But these palliative measures at least help to educate public feeling to greater humaneness, a greater sense of responsibility for the weak. If I can be of use there, and if I can give a few hundred individuals some better opportunities than they have had, I sha'n't much care whether I am scientific or not."

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Janet had pondered his words with increasing enthusiasm. What did it matter whether the man were right or wrong, so long as he was giving himself freely?

But all these pleasant reminiscences faded as soon as she had entered the doors of the hospital. The air was pure, indeed, but laden with that indefinable implication of sterilization and chemicals. The corridors along which she walked were clean, bare, and depressing. On her way to Sallie's room she passed open doors through which she saw invalids in all the stages of illness, from those who lay inert heaps, dreadfully suggestive of the dust to which they might shortly return, to those who were sitting up in chairs and beginning to believe in the reality of convalescence. The nurses she passed looked too business-like to please Janet, who did not stop to consider that sick people cannot be nursed by sympathy alone. On the floor where Sallie's room was situated she passed a white-jacketed attendant wheeling a stretcher. Janet compressed her lips and passed on quickly.

The door of Sallie's room was open, and the poor little person was lying with her head on a narrow pillow, and her arms outside the coverlet. One of her arms was motionless; but the other moved restlessly, as if trying to incite its companion to life. Her hair, deprived of its flaunting ribbon bows, was thin and lusterless. Her face was colorless, and her eyes looked out heavily at Janet.

Janet moved forward swiftly and leaned over Sallie, kissing her forehead and pressing her cheek against the restless arm.

"Oh, my dear," she murmured; "it's so hard, but you mustn't think it's going to last very long."

"I thought you'd come to-day," said Sallie, broodingly.

"You knew I'd come," said Janet, gaily.

She sat down by Sallie's bed; and the nurse, with a look of relief on her face, left the room.

"She's a stupid thing," Sallie said, crossly; "sometimes she goes out of the room, and when I ring for her

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she will keep me waiting five minutes. Dick pays her well just to wait on me, but when you're sick you're he'pless."

"You won't be sick long," Janet said; "and while you are all your friends will come to see you."

Sallie laughed harshly. "Friends? What friends have I? Just people Dick knows, and they won't be his friends any longer if he goes on livin' in slums. Who wants to come to see a sick person?"

"Plenty of people," said Janet. She was shocked at the change that illness had made in Sallie. All the sparkle and charm had died out of her face. The thing in Sallie which Janet had never quite been able to define, but which was sex-lure, had been struck away. It was as if her best self had gone, too; her poor faults and weaknesses were clearly written—the egotism, the pettiness, the envy that had never quite had full play when she was well and sure she could get what she wanted.

"I wish I were dead," said Sallie, fiercely.

"Oh no, you don't, dear," Janet said, pitifully; "because you are going to get well. And until you are well you will have beautiful memories to live on."

"What good are memories?" said Sallie, in the same fierce tone. "They don't he'p me any now. They just make my misery worse. I did have a good time abroad, and people looked at me and paid me attention, and Dick was real devoted every minute. I knew right well that when I came back here, if I wanted to, I could know just as nice people as yo' cousin, Grace Ryder."

Janet's heart contracted painfully. This pettiness and rancor was hard to see. Sallie did not seem to mind the unmasked condition of her poor little soul. "Of course you will know nice people, Sallie," Janet murmured.

"Not now," said Sallie, miserably. She made an effort as if to sit up, but her body refused to obey her. The failure was a fresh reminder of her tragedy; even while she never forgot her state, something was always arising

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to emphasize her helplessness. She bared her little teeth, almost as if in a snarl, and tears came to her eyes and dropped heavily upon her cheeks. Janet wiped them away, her own eyes full.

"My poor little Sallie," she murmured.

"Let me alone!" cried Sallie. "You don't care; nobody cares. And I meant to do so much. Dick couldn't have kep' me forever in his slums; and now it's all come to nothing!"

"It isn't you that's speaking, Sallie," Janet said, crooningly; "it's only your sick nerves. We all care for you, and when you're well you'll live where you like."

"Do you think I'll get well?" Sallie asked, with a change of tone. Her voice had all the cadence of a weary child longing for some impossible thing, almost knowing the impossibility, and yet unable to believe that the longing could not be gratified.

Janet assured her that she would; she said so over and over. Then she began to talk of what Sallie would do when she was quite herself again, picturing her social triumphs, planning a reception, and a gown that would be the envy of all the guests. The poor little person listened, comforted, for Janet's imagination was keen and her beautiful voice was soothing. But after a time she interrupted Janet, and said, broodingly:

"It's all going to be true if I get the chance to make it so. It's got to be. Dick owes me anything I ask, for it's his fault I'm like this."

"Sallie!" cried Janet, shocked.

"I tell you it is his fault! If he hadn't most driven me crazy with worry, I'd never have come to this!" Sallie said, violently. Her soft Southern voice had hardened and sharpened; it rose almost to a shout, and the nurse came quickly from the hall and looked in questioningly.

"Go away," said Sallie; "I don't need you."

The nurse lifted her eyebrows, shrugged her shoulders, and withdrew. Sallie went on passionately:

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"I say he did! It was worry over having to go to that sickenin' neighborhood, and live among those sickenin' people, that brought me to this! A wife has the right to say where she'll live! If he loved me he ought to have lived where I said! When I think of what he's done to me, I hate him! Yes, I do!"

Janet looked at her in dismay. The poor little person, by some curious twist of vanity, had forgotten that Wilson had made his choice of a place to live a condition of his proposing to her. She had forgotten his tenderness, his care. She remembered only her own wild feelings, her sense of being trapped.

"I'll make him pay," said Sallie, with an ugly look. "I'll make Dick pay for what he has cost me, if ever I get out of this! And if I don't get out of it, I'll make him pay!" Again came her painful, fruitless effort to sit up, and she moved her head helplessly on the narrow pillow. Janet covered her eyes with her hands.

"Oh, you think I'm ugly!" Sallie said. "You hate to look at me."

"Oh, it's not that, Sallie," Janet said, brokenly; "it's just that I can't bear to see you unhappy."

Sallie beat her arm up and down on the coverlet, and made clutching, mad gestures with her fingers.

"You hate me! I know you do!" she cried. "You always thought you were better than I am. You were always tryin' to get ahead of me! Every one hates me! Dick hates me! He wishes I were dead."

Janet gazed at her appalled. How was she to meet this unreason, this rancor? She leaned over and made as if to put her hand on Sallie's arm. Sallie pushed her away.

"You think I don't understand," she said; "but I've thought about it here in the nights. You all want him down in those flats, and you don't want me. You're glad I can't come. You want him yourself," she added, with a jealous glance. "You always did hate it that he paid me attention in Wisconsin, and not you."

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Janet forced a laugh. "What nonsense, Sallie," she said. "I never thought of anything but my books when Mr. Wilson taught me in Wisconsin, and I think of nothing but my work now. We are all sorry for Mr. Wilson; we want to comfort him because you won't be with him for a while."

"I am the one that needs comfort," said Sallie, breaking into wild sobbing. "I reckon you won't ever come to see me again, after all I've said."

Janet bent over her, smoothing back the lifeless brown hair, putting her firm hands on the tortured forehead.

"It's only pain that spoke, Sallie, not you. Of course I'll come again, just as soon as I can."

She murmured soothing words with a divided heart. She was touched with keen sympathy for Sallie, but in spite of herself she was affronted by Sallie's violence and suspicion. Janet's nerves shrank from a scene, and she had never before been faced with such utter lack of control. She had known what it was to feel an inner lack of control; yet she had always managed to preserve appearances of a sort. But Sallie had thrown away all reticences. There was something revolting to Janet in contact with this poor, cancerous spirit.

Sallie clung to her; but the nurse came in and said that Janet must go, because Sallie would have to rest and compose herself before taking her food, and, besides, unless she rested she would be unable to see her husband. Sallie was too exhausted by her outburst to resist. Janet bade her an affectionate good-by and went out of the room.

In the hall she found her knees trembling, and she sat down on the stairway. Sallie's nurse saw her there when she came out to fetch Sallie's food. She went over to Janet and looked at her with a calm, professional gaze.

"You don't feel faint, I hope?" she asked.

"Oh, not in the least," Janet said, rising. "I was just unexpectedly tired."

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The nurse was a large, good-looking young woman, to Janet grotesquely suggesting the hospital itself. All the operations that went on behind those cool, steady eyes would be scientific and impersonal. All the corridors of her mind would be clean and antiseptic. There would be nothing superfluous, not even prejudice. Wild little Sallie could not be in better hands.

"Mrs. Wilson upset you, didn't she?" the nurse inquired. "She's dreadful. If it killed her quicker I wouldn't mind these tantrums of hers, but, you see, they only wear her out and don't kill her. It's awful the way she treats her husband. I just won't stay in the room and watch a man mortified that way."

"When she gets better—" began Janet.

"She won't get better," said the nurse, practically.

"Then when she gets more used to it," said Janet, pitifully.

The nurse shrugged her shoulders. "She's got something of a talent for deviltry," she replied, candidly; "but you can forgive anything to the sick."

Sallie's bell jangled impatiently. Again the nurse shrugged her shoulders and went back to Sallie's room.

Slowly Janet passed down the stairs. She was quivering with sympathy for Sallie. If she found one visit to the hospital hard, what must poor Sallie feel, doomed, as she secretly knew, to stay there the rest of her life? Janet went quickly out of the building, relieved to get away from it. Then she fell to thinking of Wilson, whose spirit would be chained there so long as poor little Sallie's body lay in that narrow bed. No power, nor money, nor brains, nor goodness was of any help in a case like this.

On her way home she stopped at her cousin's house to play for a few minutes with the children. Janet was experienced enough now under the weight of the world to know that the only cure for some moods is the laughter and innocence of children. She held Grace's children to her, rested her chin on one round little shoulder, put her

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arm round a slim waist, and as she listened to their pretty chatter of the day's doings she felt comforted. They told her among other things that their dining-table was larger now, for mother's new secretary had all her meals with the governess.

This new secretary presently came to say that Mrs. Ryder would like to see Miss Bellamy. Janet, in spite of herself, took a shrewd look at Ada's successor. She was a thin, plain, quiet woman, one who had evidently accepted the fact that she was to be a background person all her life. She was the type who finds out early that she is not going to marry, and begins in her twenties to save against old age. Every line of her quiet face and gaunt body spoke of suppressions and inhibitions. There was no expectancy of anything from life but a quiet and perhaps a not unpleasant monotony. Any employer would have characterized the new secretary as reliable and safe in every respect.

"I'm dressing to go out," Grace said, kissing her cousin affectionately; "but I thought you wouldn't mind. My hair's done, and we can send away the maid and talk."

Grace sat before her dressing-table, and Janet talked to her, their eyes meeting in the mirror. There were no flowers on the dressing-table, though Janet, her senses sharp after her hour in the hospital, detected the odor of lilacs.

"Where are your flowers?" she asked; "I don't see them."

"I put them out of sight," said Grace, indifferently. "The odor was too strong."

If Janet had been looking at her cousin closely she might have seen a little muscle throbbing hotly at the base of Grace's throat. But she was thinking of Wilson and of Sallie, and she was feeling the not unnatural excitement of one who has a tragedy concerning friends to relate. Grace, through the mirror, delivered all the due amazement and pity.

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"The poor little person!" she said. "What an ending! Poor Dick!"

"It's hard for him, too," Janet agreed; "but, then, he's got something to do."

"Yes," mused Grace; "but he's only a year or two over thirty, and this may go on his whole lifetime. After all," she added, "it might be just as hard if he were older."

"I suppose he'll be like poor little Sallie," Janet said; "time will make him used to having such a home as he has in a hospital."

"It isn't that; he'll get used to a sick wife," said Grace, a little cynically. "I'm thinking of the time when he falls in love again."

A flood of color rushed over Janet's face; this remark hurt her idealism.

"I haven't known Mr. Wilson so long as you have," she said; "but I believe he's absolutely loyal. His pity for Sallie's little broken life will keep him from ever thinking of any one but her."

Grace, from the mirror, looked at Janet quizzically, affectionately, and perhaps a little sadly.

"Sallie is no wife now," she said. "Dick can keep his spirit loyal to her, but he's a young, vigorous man out in the world, meeting other women. He may keep his spirit loyal, but what about his blood, his senses, his mind? Heroes and gods, Janet, are likely to turn into mere men at certain acid tests, and other mere men and another woman may perhaps pity and understand."

There was a bitter note in Grace's voice, but she turned it into a mocking one. Then she began to ask Janet questions about her housekeeping on the West Side. "And speaking of housekeeping," she said, "Ellen Guyon is doing it in the University, and on a most pretentious scale. I've refused all her invitations so far, but heaps of people have felt obliged to go. They say your old flame sits at the head of his table in acute misery, palpably longing to get off to his books. Ellen is nagging

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at him and old Guyon; she wants her father to take him into business."

"Oh, I don't think Mark Gregory quite has a head for business," mused Janet. Then she broke into a delighted smile.

"What is it, child?" asked Grace, laughing at her through the mirror. "If only you knew how beautiful you look!"

"It's only that now and again," Janet said, "it comes over me with a kind of delightful freshness that I don't love him any more, that I couldn't be jealous of Ellen Guyon in a thousand years. I don't care what they do; they could live next door to me if they wanted to, and I might hear him through the partitions saying the things to her that he used to say to me—and I shouldn't even quiver! I forget about him every little while, and then it comes over me with such a glorious thrill that he can't hurt me."

Grace laughed again.

"You baby! Wait till you give some other man the same power over you!"

"Oh," said Janet, the free; "I'm so sure that I won't even protest to you."

"There, hook me, like a dear," said Grace. "I'm too fond of you to croak. If I weren't, I'd remind you that when we are surest we are likely to be sorriest."

Janet dined with Grace's children, and did not reach the Harrowgate until after nine o'clock. At first she thought she would not join the others in Blair's rooms; but presently it was as if her feet went there in spite of her. Wilson's eyes were on the door when she entered, and his face lighted. He was too nerve-racked to disguise his feelings. She went at once to Sonya, who was sitting by Charters. While she was murmuring her condolences, difficult because Sonya was so impassive, Wilson joined them. Charters said to Sonya:

"I suppose you'll be going back to work to-morrow, Sonya?"

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"Yes," she replied, in the deep contralto voice which to Janet was her chief attraction.

"I thought they'd keep your job for you," Charters said; "a really efficient stenographer isn't to be found every day."

"I'm not working for that firm now," Sonya said. She pronounced "working" as if it were spelled "workingk," such use of the final "g" being an unalterable trace of her native Yiddish.

"Got a better place?" Charters asked.

"A better one, yes; but not better for money," replied Sonya, hesitatingly. "I am back at a machine in Levy, Schwartz and Guyon's."

Wilson and Charters each uttered a quick exclamation.

"Jiminy Christmas!" exploded Charters. "You don't mean it?"

Sonya answered Janet's look of amazement. "While my mother was alive," she said, "I had to get fifteen dollars a week, for she needed things. My brothers stuck by her, but girls always stick better than boys. Boys get girls to go with, and then they get married. So it was up to me. But now I work where I please."

"But," cried Janet, mystified, "you can't mean that you like machine work better than stenography?"

Sonya smiled.

"It isn't that," Charters said; "you see, there's a lot of unrest in the clothing industry just now. The workers are underpaid at all times, overworked in the rush seasons, and sitting idle at their machines for hours in the slack seasons. They are not what you can call organized, especially the women. Sonya means that she thinks she can be of use to the workers—get the girls into the union, keep a watch on how things are going."

"That's right," Sonya assented.

"So she's giving up five a week, and a couple of hours of leisure a day," Charters went on, "and exchanging a clean office for a dirty work-room."

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Sonya was usually inexpressive. Her feeling seemed to smolder deep down, too deep for mere words, too deep even for tones or looks. But now she said to Janet, with a crude, passionate gesture:

"My people have no voices; they are dumb. They are always afraid—afraid of losing their jobs, afraid because some one they have to support will be in want, if they speak up like men. I'm free; I can always get a job. I'm not afraid to speak. Fear—it is a dreadful thing!" Sonya repeated her crude gesture, pointing to the circle about Blair. "These people here—do you suppose they could talk so much and easy if they were afraid of anything? They can all get jobs if they lose what they've got, or they can go and live on their relatives. But my people must keep their jobs, and are afraid to speak. I am not afraid. I don't need to be. I can help show them how to keep their jobs and speak, too."

Janet gazed at her, thrilled. What Sonya said was true. She was far closer to realities than any one in the room; she never spoke of ideals, and yet for an ideal she was cutting off a third of her wages. She was doing a big thing, and doing it unmelodramatically. Janet wondered how many of her other companions would be capable of it. She guessed shrewdly that most of them would be unable to encompass it without appropriate staging, and there, perhaps, she did them an injustice. But for the moment she saw them hypercritically as a group of small people, doing a very small share of the work of the world with a quite unnecessary display of egotism. She excepted Charters and Wilson and Soyna, especially the two latter, for they were the only ones who had really made sacrifices for their principles. What Sonya and Wilson were doing, moreover, was in the face of personal trouble. Small blame could have been attached to them if they had turned to whatever ease their money could give them, for if money is not curative, it is certainly ameliorative. But these two had not even been tempted.

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She looked at them both with kindling eyes. Sonya was talking to Charters and did not see her, but Wilson returned her glance.

"Sallie tells me you were with her this afternoon," he said.

"Ah, then she was able to see you," returned Janet, in a tone of quick relief. "I was afraid—she was so worn out when I left. Perhaps I stayed too long."

Wilson's mouth set in a stern, pained expression. After a moment he said: "I hope these paroxysms will pass. They may just be Sallie's method of wearing down to forced patience. I hope so. It would be easier for her if she could come to think that no one and no circumstance is to blame—that the thing just happened."

Janet dropped her eyes. Poor Sallie, then, had been talking to Wilson as she had talked to her. Janet had hoped that Sallie would have spared him any direct accusation. She thought of what Grace would say; she could almost hear her cousin's half-practical, half-cynical tone: "Men are only human. No man will endure forever recriminations from his wife, even an invalid wife, and go on loving her with undiminished loyalty and devotion." Janet sighed. If only the poor little person could make the most of what she had! Yet when she remembered her own undisciplined fashion of bearing her disappointment over Gregory, she held back some of her judgment. The restraint gave a fresh impetus to her sympathy for Wilson.

"I'm so sorry for you both," she said, with soft eyes. "I am going to see Sallie as often as I can."

"I knew you would help me," said Wilson, simply. He leaned back in his chair and looked at her with quiet trust and with something perhaps deeper. Janet felt faintly uncomfortable. Suddenly Grace's words leaped into her mind: "Heroes and gods are likely to turn into mere men at certain acid tests."

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Janet shook away the words. Wilson would meet every test nobly. But Grace's other words pressed in:

"He's a young, vigorous man out in the world, meeting other women. He may keep his spirit loyal, but what about his blood, his senses, his mind?"

Abruptly Janet got up, her heart beating hard. She joined young Winter, who was at the piano unrolling a musical-comedy song.

XXVIII

A WARNING

IT was a hot night in June. The houses on the Lake Shore Drive were discreetly battened down. The privileged classes had gone to sea and mountain, bending to the only laws they were not able to make to suit themselves—the laws of Nature. But it is the good luck of privilege to get around most of the laws it cannot alter; if the privileged classes could not make sea and mountains come to them, they could go to sea and mountains and maintain their superiority by assuming that they liked the process of the change. Those who stayed in Chicago, and who had any vestige of this mantle of privilege, sought cool spots, cool drinks, fans, and hirelings who would wait on them.

But in the nineteenth ward there were few palliatives for the heat. The people who knew not privilege, spent by a long day's work, simply endured the night as they had endured the day. They lay wherever they had dropped, on the iron fire-escapes which were warm to the touch, on the narrow back porches, and on the edges of the brick pavements, which still seemed to hold the hot rays of the sun. There was little care for decency; scarcely any person wore more than a single garment, and most of the children were naked. There was comparatively little sound. The mingled voice of the city, though remote enough, beat oppressively on the senses. Closer was the roar of the elevated trains and the whir of the Halsted Street cars, while still nearer was the jolting rumble of an occasional late-going wagon, the driver

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hunching forward in his seat, while the horses walked droopingly. A few little ones cried fretfully and monotonously; a few men groaned or cursed, and a few women sighed; or, their nerves snapping, spoke sharply to complaining children.

Some of those who lay on the sidewalk or the curbstones looked up enviously at the Harrowgate Apartments. People there, so they had heard, had ice-boxes with ice in them. At any rate they had wider fire-escapes, and more of them than any one else; they could sleep on the merciful iron bars, and taste whatever breeze might chance to arise. Some of them could afford to stay away from work if the next day should prove as furnace-like as the one before had. They had bath-tubs into which they could plunge when they felt the insane impulse to tear off their flesh in the sick desire to find coolness.

Inside the apartments there was some activity. Blair and Wilson and some of the other residents had installed electric fans in their living-rooms, and they and two or three of the settlement nurses had brought there some of the sickest babies in the ward, and were ministering to their little fevered bodies. Blair's room, being the largest, was the theater of the hardest work. The languid babies were laid on boards placed across chairs, where the breeze would most readily reach them. The nurses bent over them with medicine and ice-packs, for some of the little patients were very close to death. In the tail of the breeze sat or stood the mothers of the children, sick themselves with the heat, not understanding the desperate case of their little ones, for did not every one have to endure what was sent? Not understanding, but taking the ministrations of their neighbors as patiently as they took the weather, and thankful, as animals might be, for the little relief their own bodies were receiving.

Janet sat in the corner fenced off by the piano, with Ada and Blair and Mrs. Underwood. All four had been working with the nurses, and were now being "spelled,"

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as Charters said, by himself and the Hunters and Underwood. Ordinarily Janet might have thrilled at the way her companions rose to disagreeable service at the call of need. She might have reflected that the Hunters could be forgiven for their atrocious jewelry, and for their absurd posing, because of the tireless way they ran errands for the nurses or sponged the bodies of the feverish babies who were too nervous to bear the full breeze of the electric fans. She might have reflected that Underwood, with his coat off, holding a bottle up high and squintingly graduating the medicine he was pouring, was a more grateful sight than Underwood assuring whoever would listen that he had been the pioneer who had struck out the telling method of the American muck-raking article.

But Janet was too tired to be responding in any way to her environment. She was not listening to Blair or Ada or Mrs. Underwood, nor was she looking at the sick babies. Her weariness of spirit blotted out her surroundings. Presently Miss Shepherd joined the group with young Winter.

"Hail! my merry comrades," she said; "I want to put before you the case of Maggie Schmidt."

Whenever the Good Shepherd assumed a jocular manner, which did not in the least fit her personality, her friends knew that her sympathies were very much stirred. The jocularly was her way of trying to be scientific and unimpassioned. She sat down beside Janet, and said:

"I don't know that I've ever had Maggie Schmidt over here, so that you've none of you met her, probably, but you must have heard me speak of her."

"The shop-girl," Ada said, "who first opened your eyes to the fact that the big stores do indeed put chairs behind their counters, but don't allow the shop-girls to sit on them."

Miss Shepherd nodded.

"I may not have told you," she said, "that she isn't

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very strong, physically, and hasn't got much of a head. She's a nine-dollar-a-week girl now, and she'll never be anything else. She's stupid with her hands—always fumbling in a soft, ineffective way, and knocking things down. She's thirty-two, and she's never had an offer of marriage. She has been worrying, ever since she saw that she would never be promoted, as to what she was going to do for money for her old age. She used to put by a few dollars a year. Now she can't even do that, for she's not so strong as she was, and what she saves goes in medicine. Lately she's been worrying for fear she won't even keep her job."

Her hearers made no comment. Maggie Schmidt was only one of hundreds. Her typicalness did not make them the less sympathetic, but it made their sympathy a fact to be taken for granted.

"Maggie," went on Miss Shepherd, her tone hardening slightly, "has chanced to win the admiration of a man of some means. His wife is in an insane-asylum. Of course, that means he can't get a divorce, and he doesn't want to try to get an annulment because he'd rather not offend her relatives and his. If he could get a divorce, Maggie would not be allowed to profit by it, you may depend on it. He's a church-going soul, and doesn't want any scandal of any sort."

Janet knew what was coming. Her attitude toward it was one of interest rather than of shrinking.

"The gentleman proposes," Miss Shepherd went on, "to furnish and pay the rent of a little four-room flat for Maggie in whatever part of the city she chooses, and to allow her seventy-five dollars a month. She asked my advice, and I said I'd talk to her to-morrow."

There was a pause, and then Miss Shepherd said, her eyes on Blair:

"What do you think I ought to tell her?"

"Seventy-five dollars a month and a home is a great improvement on thirty-six dollars," Blair said, crisply.

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"She'll save for her old age on that, and, besides, if she can stop work she'll get stronger, and be better fitted to stand it if she ever does have to go back. Maybe the connection will last all her life or his."

Ada laughed harshly. "No irregular connection of that sort is likely to last a man's lifetime," she said; "men are too fond of freedom and change for that. No doubt this man has already told Maggie that they are both free to end it when they want to—which means that he is free."

"What if he has?" asked Blair. "That's only fair to both of them."

"Besides," went on Ada, "how do you know her health will improve if she accepts this offer? How do you know that she won't get so nervous over the irregularity of the relation, and, if she grows fond of him, worry so over the fear of his leaving her, that she'll be in worse health even than she is?"

"Ah, it's not right that a girl should have to listen to any such proposal," sighed Mrs. Underwood. "I don't know what to say. The connection might last for a long time, and she might get a great deal of happiness out of it, or a great deal of misery."

"Just like marriage in that respect," young Winter put in.

"The chances are better for a woman in marriage," Ada said.

Janet looked at Ada and at Blair. Ada's eyes were indignant, and her fingers were beating a tattoo on the arm of her chair. Blair's face wore an expression of fixed inscrutability. Janet had noticed that those two invariably took opposite sides when any discussion involving sex arose, and that they were never able to conduct their discussion tranquilly. She felt a tenseness between them that involved other issues than that pertaining to poor Maggie Schmidt.

"It isn't as if the insane wife were going to be hurt," mused Miss Shepherd.

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"You've forgotten what Maggie would do about her friends," Ada said; "she'd have to give them all up."

"I suppose she'd go to some remote part of the city and call herself by a married name, and make new friends," Miss Shepherd said.

"There'd always be the sense of concealment," Ada said, "and the fear of being found out. It's all bound to wear on her nerves."

"As it is," Miss Shepherd rejoined, "she's bound to lose her place and be on the streets in a few years. That would wear on her nerves, if you like. This is less promiscuous, at least."

"What I hate about the whole thing," said young Winter, hotly, "is the mercantile side of it. If she were going into this thing because she loved him, and nothing else mattered, I'd give her my blessing. But this calculation—there's something infernal about a civilization which makes a woman consider whether she'd better wear her flesh out in a store or sell it to a man."

Here was idealism, at least of a sort, Janet thought. She had wondered if Maggie's problem were going to be pondered solely from the point of view of bread and butter.

"You haven't said anything yet, Janet," Miss Shepherd remarked.

"There's her soul," Janet said, a little shyly, for the word "soul" was not often used in the Harrowgate flats. "We don't really live by bread alone, do we? If she went to that man she'd be sacrificing her ideals. She could go on working a few years more, and by that time surely there would be arrangements made to take care of the industrial driftwood like Maggie, and to prevent any more of it being made. Even if she were finally forced on the streets, at least she would not be making a choice; she would be saving her spiritual life to that extent."

Janet spoke haltingly, partly because she was not very sure of what she said. She would have meant it in her

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college days, or during her life at Grace Ryder's, and she thought she meant it now; but even as she spoke she wondered if Maggie's spiritual life would not be a better thing in the care of this man who wanted her than it was in a shop. Janet felt that what she said would be true of herself, of Ada, of Miss Shepherd—of any of these reformers who were discussing the matter on the material side; but she wondered if it would be true of Maggie.

Her inward tentativeness made her glance soft and indirect; her parted mouth had an appealing droop. Blair and Ada were struck by her face; they both thought that they had never before seen her look really beautiful. They forgot what they had been talking about.

"Oh, when people begin to speak of souls, and of not living by bread alone—" said young Winter, rudely. He rose, adding: "It's this accursed heat; I have to get nearer the breeze."

One of the nurses beckoned to their corner for help, and Ada and Mrs. Underwood left their chairs to respond. Blair smiled quizzically at Miss Shepherd, and said:

"Well, Gentle Shepherd, we've left you about where you were, haven't we?"

"I think I'll repeat this conversation to Maggie, and then leave it to her, with no word about my own views," Miss Shepherd said. "Maybe Maggie will be braver than I should."

"Now, I wonder what she means by that," Blair said, as Miss Shepherd rose abruptly and walked away. "Don't you go, too, Miss Bellamy," he added, as Janet made a motion to rise. "You look dead tired, and, besides, there's really nothing for you to do for the little ones at this minute."

That was true. More mothers had entered with their children, but more of the residents had also arrived. Every one was busy; the babies that had been improving under the cool-air treatment were being moved gradually to the less airy space, while the latest little comers were

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put in their places. Some of the mothers were being given fruit and cooling drinks. The crowded room, the cluttered look the mothers and children gave it, the activity—all dizzied and sickened Janet. She moved to a seat where she need not look at it.

"You know," Blair said to her, "that you were very sentimental in your attitude about this Maggie Schmidt affair?"

"I shouldn't call it sentimental," Janet replied; "but I want to keep the attitude, no matter what it may be named."

"You shouldn't want to," said Blair, in his strongest didactic tone; "you insist on shutting your eyes to facts, to the way people are made."

"But if I want to—" protested Janet.

"You haven't the right! You want to bind people more than they are already bound with outworn precepts and doctrines. It's bad enough to have people hampered by the present industrial conditions, without having them still further tied down with notions that lead to nowhere except to the maintenance of things in their present abominable state."

Janet compressed her lips. She was rather resentful of this boomerang criticism of Blair's. After all, she thought, she and Maggie Schmidt were only two individuals; what they did and thought would have very little effect on the general social movement. But she did not say this aloud, for she knew very well the kind of answer Blair would make.

"These iron-clad rules and bonds!" Blair said, explosively. "Do you know what I thought of when Miss Shepherd was talking of this man's insane wife? I thought of poor Wilson. There he is, chained to a woman who acts as if she had ceased to love him, and whom I believe he has ceased to love. But the law says he can't free himself from her."

The blood beat in Janet's temples. "I don't see that we need discuss particular cases," she murmured.

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Blair continued as if he had not heard her. "Wilson is young and lonely. He'd be less than human if he could stand it. Somewhere or other there must be some girl, lonely, too, and brave enough to help him pick up the pieces of his life. It's the only thing that will keep him going with this awful strain he's under. I keep urging him to take a good vacation. What I'm really hoping is that while he is away he'll meet such a girl and bring her here."

Janet raised her eyes and looked at Blair steadily.

"Mr. Wilson would not be the first person who had to live under a strain and suffer deprivations," she said. "Think of the hundreds of school-teachers with old or sick parents to support. Perhaps they'd like to marry, only they don't have the chance."

"It's wrong—it's wrong," Blair said. "They ought to marry; or, if not, they ought to have a man's love in their lives, anyhow. Every woman ought to have a lover. But just because they don't make or take their chances, that's no reason why a person like Wilson, who could get a chance, should stand aside on account of some outworn notions of loyalty."

Janet rose, rather unsteadily. "I hope Mr. Wilson will never forsake his ideals," she said. "I believe I'll go down-stairs, since I don't seem to be needed here."

She left the room, feeling that it was all intolerable—Blair and his theories, the buzzing of the electric fans, the whimpering of the children, the movements of the helpers, and the silent, watching mothers. As soon as she had gone Ada went over to Blair.

"Look here!" she said, abruptly, as she sat beside him. "I know exactly what you've been doing. You've taken this Maggie Schmidt as a peg on which to hang your sex-theories, and you've expounded them to Janet."

Her tone was exasperated, and she looked at him indignantly.

"Supposing I have, Ada?" he said, calmly.

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Ada eyed him for a time without speaking. Her color heightened, and then died down. "I can tell you exactly how you are going about this," she said, "because I know the way you've gone about it before. At first, when you express your views to a girl, she is shocked. After a time, of varying duration, she becomes used to what you say. Perhaps she argues with you. Then you proceed to convince. If you make a convert—in case she is attractive, the next step—" She broke off and added, in a high, sharp voice: "Charles, you must stop it! Let Janet alone!"

"Let Janet alone!" he repeated, half angry, half mocking. "You talk as if Janet were a child, unable to make her own judgment, and as if I were a rake, looking for victims."

Ada faced him defiantly. "You owe me something yet," she said; and her face was strained and set.

"This weather is making every one half insane, I think," said Blair, harshly.

He got up quickly and went over to the window, whence he stood looking gloomily at the row of sick children. Ada picked up a magazine which was propped on the music-rack, and turned the leaves restlessly, seeing nothing.

Janet, meanwhile, had gone to her own apartment. But the heat there seemed stifling, and after hesitating in the doorway for a few moments she went down to Wilson's rooms. She expected to find some of the other members of the community there, but Wilson was alone, ministering to three little children. He looked up as she entered.

"Get me the brandy, quick," he said; "this child's collapsing."

She hurried to the kitchen and brought back a bottle of brandy and a spoon. Wilson had a child in his arms. She measured him a spoonful of the liquor, and he forced it between the child's set teeth, motioning to Janet for more. Presently he nodded, without looking at her, and

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she put the bottle down. Wilson watched the little one intently for a moment, and then laid it where the breeze from the fan would reach it.

"Mrs. Hunter was here," he said, still without looking at Janet, "but Hunter sent down for her."

Janet bent over the children, looking into one after another of the little sick faces. The child who had had the brandy lay with its eyes closed, scarcely breathing.

"I'll give it more brandy in a little while," Wilson said.

Janet straightened and went over to the little mahogany arm-chair that had been bought for Sallie. She felt sick to her very soul. Her zest for the cause had died down; she could no longer blame her lack of interest upon hot weather or overwork. The fact was that she had no longer the high, fine, satisfied sense of fulfilment that had been hers; the cause was not warm enough. Something was wrong with life—the sick babies were one symptom of the wrong, and no cause was big enough to set it right. What did she matter? Nothing she might suffer mattered, of course; but nothing she might do to help mattered, either, to any one but herself.

"More brandy!" said Wilson, sharply.

She sprang up. Wilson had the child in his arms and was feeling the little pulse. Janet hurriedly poured out a spoonful of brandy, and another, and another. The little lips were blue, the little body motionless. Together they worked over the baby, silently. There was no sound except the click of the spoon against the baby's teeth, the faint stirrings of the other children, and the whirring of the fan. After a long time the baby began to cry faintly and a little color crept into its lips and cheeks.

"It'll do now," said Wilson, in a tone of relief.

Again he laid down the child. He passed his handkerchief over his forehead. She noticed how weary his blue eyes were, and how harshly the line of his cheek showed in the dim light. He glanced at her dully. Then a look of fire flashed into his face.

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"Janet," he cried, "I need you so, I need you so! Don't leave me!"

A sudden terror smote Janet; a desire for peace and safety. Hardly knowing what her words were, she said: "I—I'm not failing you. Don't think that. But I'm going to Wisconsin to-morrow. I must go away from here."

XXIX

THE FIRST SURRENDER

OUR most gracious yielding to life as we grow older is to lessen our demands. Yet instinctively we try to bargain; silently we promise to be passive and philosophical if life will permit us the sense of being victorious over ourselves. Surely we have a right to the lordship of that inner kingdom; have we not, by degrees, given up the certainty that we are to conquer this and that kingdom of the world? Perhaps the last exaction we relinquish is the conviction that life, after all, owes us something.

Janet had left Chicago in June, knowing that something had happened to her, that her certainty that she could handle her life masterfully was gone. She returned the end of October, conscious that her summer had not helped to make her certain of the future. She was afraid; it was as if she were walking softly, with her head bent, not daring to look up, not daring to proceed with sure step. She was coming back to her work, but somehow it had failed her; it could no longer fill her life joyously. Her very face had changed. She looked older and graver; some of the zest and sparkle had died out of her expression, and yet the seeking look of her first girlhood had come back—her inalienable hunger for happiness. She did not realize that; she hoped the eager ache merely meant that she was returning to Chicago with something of her conquering spirit of the year before.

She had spent most of the summer campaigning in Wisconsin for the suffrage cause. It had been good for her

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to be thrown with the country people. It had been a relief to look into their open faces, so unlike the mobile city faces she knew so well. The women, especially, were different, and nothing showed the fact more definitely than their clothes, the colors of which were selected, not because they were pretty, but because they wore well. These women knew nothing of the city woman's struggle to please men through personal beauty. It had been a relief to see working-men who owned something to show for their hard labor. She liked adjusting her ideas to meet the experience of these people, to whom the city words "organization," "unions," "strikes," "lockouts," "open shop" meant nothing.

Janet had, moreover, enjoyed the sense of power that was hers whenever she saw that her appeal had reached the people. She tried to make her listeners see that women wanted the vote to protect themselves and their children. When Janet spoke to these women and men from the standpoint of food and helpless children and young girls, they understood her. They knew what she meant when she said, "How would you like your little girl to work all day long in a hot, crowded, dusty factory?" Or, "How should you like to see a mother crying because she could afford to give her children only beans instead of meat, for the cost of living was so high?"

She had spent the month of October in the east with Grace Ryder, who had left Chicago in the late spring. Janet had hoped that the change of scene might help get her back her old poise and certainty; but she had made the discovery that conflict and rebellion in the kingdom of oneself can be carried on as unremittingly by sea and mountains as it can on the mean streets of the disinherited. She drew some inspiration from her cousin, who went through the motions of living with her usual air of light, mocking enjoyment. Janet understood that Grace was trying to lift her eyebrows at her own hurts. She and her husband had never been separated for so

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long before. They went through the form of writing each other affectionate letters, and Janet knew that Grace scanned every line Ryder sent for evidences either of perfunctoriness or of affection. What hastened Grace's decision to go to Chicago was a letter in which Ryder said that he missed her and the children, and was waiting for them to bring back home to him.

Thus, on the last day of October, Janet and Grace and the children were being driven from the railway-station to the Lake Shore Drive. The children, peering out of the windows, were giving little joyful shrieks as they recognized familiar landmarks. Grace was saying to herself that, of course, Harrison could not leave his office to come and meet them. Janet was struggling with a growing sense of excitement and trepidation. Soon she would be seeing—every one. She told herself fiercely that that was just what she meant—Ada and every one else in the Harrowgate Apartments. Her face became intent and grave.

Grace glanced at her and said: "My dear, you've straightened up your shoulders already, as if you couldn't wait to take all the burdens of the world on them. Perhaps I'd better tell you something that will affect you pretty nearly. I didn't tell you before, because I didn't want to spoil your holiday. But I've read a few Chicago papers this month, though I've kept them away from you. Besides, I've had Harrison's letters. There's been a strike in the clothing trades."

"A strike!" cried Janet.

"Everybody's out—the workers in Levy, Schwartz and Guyon went out first, I believe. Forty thousand, all told, and they've been out almost a month. Everything is tied up; Harrison is dreadfully annoyed, and old Guyon is dancing mad. They're losing no end of money."

Janet paid little attention to the angle of Grace's vision. Grace would naturally look at the matter from the employer's point of view. But Janet had lived close to the people long enough to know what a strike meant to them.

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As long ago as when Sonya Riborsky had left her desk and gone back to her machine it had been rumored that the workers in the clothing trades could not go on much longer in their present conditions. They knew, what the public would not believe, that wages were not paid according to a fixed scale, that the employer could control absolutely the wages of his workers, and that ignorant foreigners and frightened young girls had to make what bargains they could with the "boss." They knew of the blacklisting, the misrepresentation, the merciless "speeding up," the arbitrary cutting down of the price of piece-work, and of the breaking of the inspection laws. And Janet, who had seen the effect of it all in many homes, had known, too, that some time or other the tension would break.

But, sitting beside Grace, who, of course, would have none of the real information, Janet did not realize the momentousness of what had really happened. She did not know what a spontaneous matter this strike had been. Forty thousand men, women, and children, uninspired by any walking delegate, untrained by any labor organization, had put down their chalk and shears, their needles and thread, and had refused to make clothes. This leaderless movement of theirs was destined to be marked by all the unwisdom, simplicity, seriousness, and heroism characteristic of a real people's movement.

"What does Harrison say?" asked Janet.

"Nothing, really," Grace replied; "no more than I've told you."

"They'll want arbitration—the workers," Janet mused, mindful of what she had heard Blair and Wilson say when the prospect of such a strike had been discussed. "Grace—you'll ask Harrison to agree to arbitrate?"

Grace dropped her eyes. "I don't know, Janet."

"But the women, the children who are suffering!" Janet protested. "Grace, this is a woman's question. Surely you'll stand by mothers and their little ones?"

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"I never yet have interfered in Harrison's business affairs," Grace said, in a low tone.

"You might have said that a few years ago," persisted Janet, "before women awoke to the fact that we need each other. But now—surely, Grace!"

The color rose in Grace's face. "I—never interfere with Harrison," she said, with effort.

Janet understood at last. Grace did not feel that she could weaken whatever hold she had on Ryder by opposition of any sort. Impulsively Janet pressed her cousin's hand.

"But there's no reason why you shouldn't speak to him," Grace said. "Harrison owns a great deal of stock in the factory. Old Guyon, I think, is rather afraid of him."

"I wonder what they'll have been doing," murmured Janet.

By "they" she meant Wilson and Blair. These two, she knew, were the ones to whom many of the strikers would turn for advice and assistance. She sat in a brown-study while the car rolled up the Lake Shore Drive, and the gleeful children pointed out to each other this house and that, and Grace began to breathe rather quickly, wondering if her husband would be at home to meet her.

"I'll send the car on with you," Grace offered.

"Thank you; I do want to get home as quickly as I can," Janet said.

The car stopped; the excited children kissed Janet hastily and scrambled down. Grace bade her good-by. The door of the Ryder house opened, and the children ran in with joyful words of greeting for the relaxed and smiling butler, and for their governess and nurse. No one but the hirelings stood in the doorway. Grace went slowly up the walk, and the car drove on.

As Janet looked out on the dusty streets of the nineteenth ward she saw in them evidence enough to convince her that the strike was really on. There were many more

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men than usual congregated in groups, talking with such intensity and seriousness that even an unenlightened observer could have seen that something was afoot. The women in the doorways showed concern, even distress. Some old men, dependents, spoke broodingly together. They were out of the fight, so far as usefulness was concerned; all they could do was pray in the churches. They had lived and suffered through too many strikes. They did not want to cower each in his corner of a home, where the breadwinner grew more disheartened day by day as the deadlock continued, and where his wife was sad or angry at seeing the household treasures pawned, one by one. Nor did these old men want to have their own poor stomachs pinched.

There were some young people who laughed together. They thought, doubtless, that they could get other work, and the excitement of their defiance and bravery gave them a kind of pleasure. They were like young soldiers in the beginning of a siege, not knowing what they had to endure. Their elders realized so well that they did not need to talk it over. But Janet, even in her hurried passing in the car, could read the unity and good feeling among the strikers. It took one hundred and fifty people to make one suit of clothes, and that hundred and fifty knew as little of each other's minds and souls as they did of each other's work. The machine operator looked down on the baster; the cutter would not speak to the finisher. But now all jealousies were forgotten; they were at one in what they wanted and in what they were willing to endure.

When Janet reached her own flat she found no one there; but Ada had left a note pinned on the door saying that a few of the community were lunching in Blair's flat. Janet took off her wraps and went to Blair's rooms. The same atmosphere of intense earnestness which she had felt in the streets greeted her here. The welcome she received was sincere but brief. Ada came forward and kissed her.

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Wilson, whose eyes she sought only for a moment, put his two hands about hers, as if involuntarily. Blair and Charters asked her why she had not come before, and the others present gave her characteristic greetings, Sonya's being only a somber smile. Then they went on with their talk of the strike, while a striker's wife brought them in a buffet luncheon. Janet sat by and listened silently, picking up what information she could. She felt like a laggard in the battle as she heard of all that had been done and of all that was needed.

Evidently, no strike had ever been systematized as this one had. It had been a revolt of the unorganized; but the trade-unions had come forward and called it their battle, and were standing between the strikers and starvation. They had established four commissary stations, whence they were giving forth tons of beans and rice, hundreds of thousands of loaves of bread. Speakers were being sought to help educate the public, and to keep heart in the strikers themselves, and there were plans on foot for a City Council committee which might arbitrate between employers and employees, if the employers would consent. If that should fail, Wilson and Blair meant to get a senatorial committee, bearing the authority of the state, to look into the cause of the strike and bring about peace.

Janet's mind vivified every detail as she heard the strike discussed. For her this was no matter of facts and statistics. She had lived among the poor, and she knew how to measure what she heard in terms of bread and grief, hunger and violence. With all her old-time fervor she silently dedicated herself to the cause of the strike, and as she did so for the moment all thought about her own happiness dropped away. She forgot any sense of trepidation she had felt about the future, any sense of something vital that was lacking in her scheme of things. For the time being she was merely a throbbing vein of the strike.

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When luncheon was over she approached Sonya.

"I suppose you are picketing somewhere, Sonya?" she asked.

"Sure; in front of Levy, Schwartz and Guyon's, and a fierce time we are having of it, too. Miss Shepherd and another lady are with us sometimes."

"I'll picket, too," Janet said; "but not in front of that factory, I think."

"It's no time for scabs," Sonya said, her eyes gleaming; "people would rather die than scab. My sister-in-law, she cries and cries. She is sick, anyway. The doctor told Anton she would be dead before the year is out! But she likes nice things, and they had a nice place. Now she has had to move into three rooms, and she used to have five. She had to pawn her embroidered pillow-shams. And I says to her, 'What is it? You want Anton to be a scab, then?' So she stops crying and says, 'If Mrs. Rudnitsky won't let her man be a scab, I can stick, too.' So I says, 'I don't know her.' And she says, 'She just moved here a week since. She has three little children and a new baby. When I went in this morning she shows me a letter from her man's boss. It says he could have thirty dollars a week if he would come and be a scab. She says she can get on with no food nor coal, but she can't get on without freedom for them four children.' So you see," concluded Sonya, "every one in this strike sees some one else worse off than won't scab. We are going to try and get some of the rich ladies to picket."

Janet felt sure that the spirit of sisterhood was strong enough for that. She had gathered that in this strike the voice of women at large had been heard, new enough in industrial disputes. The women's clubs and the suffrage clubs had indorsed the strike, consistently sending aid. To Janet, with her dramatic imagination, this strike was a test of the feminist movement, an opportunity for the women to speak to the men, whose comrades they wanted to be, but whose comrades they could not be

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whole-heartedly when other women and their children were suffering. Janet could hear the Voice of the Women.

"Because we are mothers," the Voice said, "we must protest against conditions which make a decent home an increasing impossibility, which make childhood bitter and motherhood a sorrow. For centuries we have been silent about these matters, but we have found ourselves. At last you men, our comrades, who have so long made the laws without us, you must listen to what we, the mothers of the race, have to say about the world in which we and our children live."

Janet's eyes were still deep with her thought when Charters joined her and Sonya. His glance and his voice softened as he spoke to Sonya.

"I am going to walk down with you this afternoon, Sonya. Yes, I am; those policemen are going to see that they can't jostle you off the sidewalk as they did this morning."

Sonya's face lightened; for a moment her inscrutable eyes revealed the happiness she felt in his air of protection. Then she lowered her glance and said, quietly:

"All right, if you say so."

Charters looked at her, blinking like a man who has seen a vision which has departed too soon. Then he put his hand under her arm with a gesture as protecting as his voice had been, and the two moved away. Janet watched them with a little thrill of pleasure. All personal life was not necessarily to be submerged in this strike. It was not until she rose to go to her own flat that Wilson joined her. They walked down-stairs without looking at each other. As they reached her door Janet said:

"Tell me of Sallie."

"No better."

"And no happier?"

"No happier."

They entered Janet's living-room in silence. Wilson took his favorite chair by the bookcase. Janet sat with

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her back to the windows and looked at him. He was thinner than she had ever known him to be; his face seemed reduced to a frame and skin, and yet the gauntness had taken away nothing from the distinction of his fine lines. His blue eyes burned like those of a man in a fierce fever. She could not bear to see his thin, tense hands. There was outward evidence enough that he had passed through a hard summer. All that was motherlike in Janet responded to a certain childlike weariness and appeal in his face.

"Oh," cried Janet to herself, "oh, my poor, sea-blue Injun!"

Neither of them spoke. Gradually the tension of Wilson's body relaxed. Janet, looking at him, knew that he had the sense of a man who has come home at last after a long, fruitless voyage. For a little while he had forgotten the past and was indifferent to the future; he was only aware of the moment, was drawing in gratefully an ineffable peace because Janet was there. That rancorous, hateful, pathetic little body in the hospital was only a sad dream. The forty thousand garment-workers dragging through the hunger strike with their dependents, helpless old parents and helpless little children, receded to some remote shore of their own, where for a little while they might carry on their bitter drama without him. And still farther off was the great public whom he was trying to arouse to a sense of brotherhood with the strikers; the public and the great city that housed it had ebbed away. Wilson was in a world of his own—not the world that he had dreamed of, one of rapture; but one of merciful peace that lulled him, that soothed away all his sense of pain and of loss.

Looking back afterward, Janet knew that this half-hour had marked the turning-point of their lives. They had not spoken, they had scarcely glanced at each other, and yet they had known a communion closer than speech or touch, more ineffable than any expression. Janet felt

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as if, one by one, invisible muffling bonds were slipping from about her. She had the strange, unbelieving sense of one who breathes some pure, fine air after a long confinement in some cabined space. She had no longer any fear. She could trust the future. She knew at last a wide freedom, unaccompanied by exhilaration, by any sense of power; rather a deep, solemn emotion. She thought she would have cared for nothing more joyful; it was a noble hour, and she would have been glad if it could have lasted forever.

XXX

THE STRIKE

THE two sat silent, unconscious of space and time, not hearing the noises from the busy street outside, not even conscious of each other's bodies. They were living perfectly but quietly in an understanding that went beyond all words, even beyond all thoughts. Their spirits were lying side by side in some swaying vastness, every undulation of which bore them a serenity beyond joy.

At last Wilson took out his watch, and at that the world that had been standing back swept in upon him. Again his whole being was beaten upon by the sense of Sallie, of the strike, of the public which would not understand. He was like a sleeper awakened from a dream of peace to the consciousness of pain. He sighed, and spoke reluctantly.

"I must go. I said I'd be at Levy, Schwartz and Guyon's this afternoon. They had some trouble with the picketing this morning. It won't do the strike-breakers and police any harm to see that the strikers have a few well-dressed and able-bodied sympathizers. Charters said he would go over, and Blair will if he has time."

Janet rose. "I was going later on," she said; "but first I promised to hear Mr. Blair speak at one of the meetings. We can go as far as the corner together."

As they left the building Wilson spoke again about the strike:

"I've been trying to reach Ryder," he said, "to get him to consent to arbitrate. Guyon will have to do whatever Ryder says. But he's in New York now—Ryder, I mean."

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"Oh, then he must have passed us on the train," Janet said. "Grace did go home unexpectedly. I remember now, she did not telegraph him till we'd got to Albany."

Wilson was far enough away in thought from Grace's nuances of sentiment.

"Ryder will be at home late this afternoon," he said. "If I can get Levy, Schwartz and Guyon to yield something, the other clothier and tailor associations may be induced to follow their example."

They parted at the corner. Now that the world had rushed in upon them both, Janet preferred to be alone. She could not look at his worn face without longing to ask him in detail about the summer; whom had he seen? What had his recreation been? Did he sleep well? All that was fostering in her had awakened at his nearness; she wanted to take care of him. How could she listen and share with him in talk about the strike, when she was longing to say:

"But you—how do you bear the days? Yes, I know that men are out of work, and their children are suffering—but your hands are thin and so tense! Ryder should arbitrate; all those forty thousand people have a right to justice—but your eyes are tired."

Blair was to speak in a hall close to the shopping district. Janet had almost reached it when, as she was passing a florist shop, she heard some one calling her. She turned her head and saw Ellen Gregory in her motor, the seat beside her occupied by a box of flowers. Ellen held out her hand.

"How do you do?" she said. "You're the very person who can help me. I've just been buying flowers for a sick friend who is in a hospital, and it just occurred to me that I might send a box to that poor Mrs. Wilson. She used to be one of my husband's students, and, besides, we've always known the Wilsons. I sent the man in for the flowers, and then it occurred to me that I didn't know where the poor creature is."

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Ellen was looking well; motor clothes suited her, and her pleasure in herself at thinking of doing a courtesy to Sallie Wilson had brought color to her cheeks. Janet surveyed her in a detached way as she gave the desired address.

"I've just motored down with Mr. Gregory from Lake Geneva," Ellen said; "he always likes me to go with him. I suppose Mrs. Ryder has told you he's only teaching six months a year now?"

"No, I hadn't heard," Janet said.

"He simply had no time for research work with all that teaching," Ellen explained; "and, besides, Father wants his help. Mr. Gregory is getting tremendously interested in business, too. It will really give him more freedom."

Ellen spoke with the utmost complacency and sense of power. Her feeling of superiority over Janet had returned, partly because the queer girl chose to mix herself up with all sorts of queer people and live in the slums, and partly because Ellen knew that the Guyon influence had quite converted Gregory. He had yielded to the soft living she had been able to provide for him. His scholarly interests were becoming his avocation rather than his vocation. He liked her world the better as he came to feel that it was merely an accident that he had not been born in it. His new habits pleased him.

His wife translated it all in terms of sentiment. She could help him; yes, but that was not why he loved her. Their marriage had proved that she was the real mate for him, and they could both afford to smile at any cheap sentimentality in his past. She patronized that past, and valued herself the more that she had seen his worth and had taken that past away from him. Therefore, from the vantage of her motor-car she looked down on Janet, and reflected that her shirtwaist was not quite fresh, and that she had aged five years in a twelvemonth. Janet understood, and was so indifferent that she was not even amused.

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"I dare say Mr. Gregory will like being in business," she said, civilly.

"I'm sorry he should be mixed up in it just now," Ellen said. "I was so annoyed when Father telephoned up to us this morning that he wanted to see Mark. I suppose it's something about this tiresome strike. Why couldn't the people have waited till it was cooler weather? It's so hot this week, and I do like my husband to be in the country as late as possible; he needs it."

Janet's indifference fled. She thought of Ellen and Gregory, cool and complacent all summer in the Lake Geneva home Ellen's money had provided, while the people who made that money for them toiled in the heat. She thought of what would soon happen to the strikers when the weather changed; to hunger would be added cold and the fear of the winter. Her eyes burned, and she drew for Ellen a vivid picture of the suffering of the garment-workers.

Ellen listened uneasily and kept looking into the florist's shop. Her chauffeur emerged as Janet's vibrant voice ceased.

"Here you are!" she said. "Thanks so much for that address, Miss Bellamy. And as for the garment-workers," she added, as the chauffeur mounted to his seat, "of course I'm dreadfully sorry, but you know they have brought it on themselves. For my part, I think it is the will of God that some of us are born rich and some poor, and there isn't any use in trying to change. Besides, Mr. Gregory says that no one class can help any other class; things must just work themselves out."

"Good-by," said Janet, quickly. "I am sure Mrs. Wilson will appreciate the flowers."

She passed on, raging at the easy optimism of Gregory, living on his wife's money—Gregory, who had been no better born than many of the garment-workers; Gregory, a small farmer's son, who had got the chance of an education. She compared him in her own mind

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with the factory foremen whom Miss Shepherd often berated; people who rose from the ranks were nearly always more merciless in the use of their power than those who had been born to authority. She wondered how she could ever have loved Gregory; it was not love for him, but love for some ideal lover whom she had thrust into his body, because there was some lure in that body which caught her. It was as if she had traveled many leagues on the highway of the soul since she had given her promise to Gregory.

Ellen she felt less contempt for. Ellen was palpably superficial, palpably anxious to accept the conventions and beliefs which had been made for her, and very anxious to avoid anything that was disagreeable and unharmonious. Ellen she could regard as negligible; besides, it was not Ellen whom she had loved. It was perhaps only human for her to feel more keenly against the one who had put aside her love.

Suddenly she felt a disinclination to hear Blair speak. What was the good? She knew so well what he would say. The words would be useful, no doubt, to most of his hearers, but not, in her present mood, to her. Moreover, she knew that she would be flattering Blair's vanity if she sat in his audience, and she was ashamed of herself that in this hour of her greatest emotion she could consider any one's pride of self.

She entered a car which would take her to the factory of Levy, Schwartz and Guyon. If only, she thought, men like Ryder and his sort could understand these people, surely they would concede more to them. It was not heartlessness that separated the Ryders from the Riborskys, but lack of imagination. No; she reconsidered; it was not that. Men of all classes have imagination enough, but it has been wrongly trained. The Ryders of the world had their imaginations trained by institutions; they had wrong habits of imaginative inference. It was in appreciation of the facts that they were lacking, not

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in imagination. People like herself, like Ada and Wilson and Blair and Charters, could see the facts about poverty distinctly, because their imaginations were too naïve to fall into institutional ruts.

When Janet got off the car and walked toward the factory she passed through a slowly thickening crowd of strikers and spectators; the strikers, obeying, most of them, a blind habit, had come back to the place where they spent most of their waking hours. Some of them were staring up at the factory. It had been the great power in their lives; more compelling in a way than their wives and children; it had been their master that they had feared and perhaps hated. Now, responsive to some deep-seated impulse, they had thrown off the power of that master. They could starve, for they were used to privation; but they did not believe they could yield.

Among the strikers were many representatives of the mob element. They were easy to distinguish by the loathsome look of curiosity and lust of evil excitement on their faces. In front of the building itself the crowd was much thicker, especially in the roadway, where vehicles had much ado to pass. The center of interest was the sidewalk immediately in front of the factory.

Here walked, with who knows how much trepidation, the pickets, mainly young girls. A few men, young Jews chiefly, were also picketing, their shoulders bent or swaggering as the case might be, but their heads up and their eyes alight. Among the young girls Janet saw Sonya and Miss Shepherd. Fringing these marchers on either side were policemen and strike-breakers. Whenever the pickets attempted to address a "scab" trying to pass furtively into the factory, they were seized roughly by the policemen and ordered to pass on. Two of the strike-breakers made a point of jostling the girl pickets and calling out insulting remarks to them. These men the police did not molest.

Janet saw Wilson and Charters on the edge of the side-

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walk, opposite the main door of the factory, where the strike-breakers were thickest. Always Charters had his eyes on Sonya. Once when one of the strike-breakers knocked Sonya's hat awry with his elbow, Charters started forward. As if she had expected this, Sonya turned and flashed him a quick look of appeal. Charters, Wilson, and Janet read that look aright. If Charters made any disturbance it would be Sonya who would be arrested, and not the strike-breaker.

An automobile had been slowly making its way to the curb where Janet stood. The door opened, and Gregory stepped out. Janet wondered, in a detached way, what he was doing here in the midst of things that were alive; why was he not sitting over his dead books? Knowing every line of Gregory's face as she did, she could tell that he was disturbed. He detested crowds, and she wondered, rather scornfully, if he were by chance a little afraid.

Gregory, his eyes fixed, his under-lip pinched in, began to cross the sidewalk rather quickly. He knocked against Sonya, and, trying to save himself, he unintentionally pushed her off the sidewalk against a strike-breaker, who knocked her down. Instantly Charters and Wilson sprang forward. Wilson picked up Sonya; but Charters, quite wild with rage, grappled with Gregory, striking him on the cheek and throwing him. As Gregory fell, Charters turned on the strike-breaker and managed to deal him one stout blow before two policemen closed in on him and arrested him, one of them clubbing him.

Janet had watched the scene, her hands tightly clasped. Some primitive cruelty in her rejoiced at the blow given Gregory, exulted that he was hurt. An obscure, unworthy wave of revenge swept over her; she would not have admitted it, but there it was. She even exulted in the bleeding face of the strike-breaker.

"You'd better get out of this," Janet heard Miss Shepherd whispering, breathlessly; and she slipped into the crowd surging about the curb.

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Gregory had gone into the factory; Wilson was trying to protect Sonya from a policeman, and was talking earnestly. Janet, watching the scene cynically, decided that it was only the fact that Wilson was known to be wealthy and of a good family which saved him from arrest, too. Doubtless Sonya would be charged with assault. Wilson made his way through the crowd with Sonya and two policemen, his eyes seeking for Janet. She pushed a path to join him. She got Sonya's hand in hers and pressed it. Sonya was not aware of the pressure, nor of the curious faces gaping at her. She was looking at Charters, whose forehead was bleeding where the policeman had clubbed him.

Charters was brought to the spot where Sonya stood, the policemen pooling their delinquents, and they and the crowd waited for the patrol-wagon. Charters, too, was unaware of the curious spectators, who watched his every movement. He bent down to Sonya and whispered:

"I love you with all my heart!"

"None of that," growled one of the policemen, who probably thought Charters was trying to suggest to Sonya the line of defense she should take in court.

Sonya lifted a glorified face. Charters had just given her the best defense she would ever need her whole life through. Some of those who looked at her might have thought that it was the radiance of the martyr which was lighting her. Sonya was beyond caring what any one thought. The love that had arisen above creed and class was crowned at last. What her starved heart had never dared dream of had come to pass. Her man of all the world loved her. She could bear anything now.

"I am very happy," she said, in Yiddish.

Charters understood. A policeman pushed roughly between him and Sonya, and he yielded passively, a smile on his frank, fresh-colored face. An arrest was only a lark now.

Janet, too, understood Sonya's meaning, even if she

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could not translate the words. The pickets, disturbed but resolute, kept on walking, a little more quickly, perhaps, a little reluctant to address the scabs, at least until the patrol should have passed. The strike-breakers, more confident, jostled them more roughly than ever. The policemen wore the conscious, superior air of those who, being the only ones in authority, have successfully exercised that authority. The strikers on the outskirts talked excitedly to one another. The curious spectators gazed with unglutted interest at Sonya, still dirty from her fall, at Charters' bruised forehead, and at the bleeding mouth of the strike-breaker, who had all the mannner of the maltreated, innocent by-stander. He did not seem to realize that no one sympathized with him, except, perhaps, the police; certainly not the mob element, who, as long as they could gaze upon blood, were not particular whose blood it was.

And no one but Janet knew that happiness at this strange moment had lighted upon two whose case might have seemed to the unenlightened most difficult. To them the crowd meant nothing; they were alone in each other's hearts. The patrol came beating down the street, and the crowd turned toward it. Sonya and Charters seized the moment to exchange a quick, tender look.

Janet looked aside, tears in her eyes, and blindly pushed her way across the street and out of the crowd.

XXXI

RYDER'S TRIBUTE TO SENTIMENT

JANET walked down the long street leading from the factory, at intervals wiping away tears. She could hardly have said why she was weeping, except that life was too strange and complex. She took a car going eastward, and got out two or three squares from the Lake Shore Drive. It was scarcely more than half a dozen hours since she had parted from Grace's children, but she wanted them again. She wanted to plunge deep into their innocence and beauty. The man who opened the door to her informed her that Mrs. Ryder was at home, but was engaged for the moment.

As Janet was passing the library on the way to the nursery the door opened, revealing Grace and Mrs. Underwood. Mrs. Underwood was a gentle little person, very much aware of social amenities. But now, when she saw Janet, she forgot that they had not met for four months, and that some sort of greeting was natural. She wrung her hands softly, and said:

"Oh, can't you ask Mrs. Ryder to help?"

Janet looked from Mrs. Underwood to Grace.

"I've told this lady," said Grace, firmly but gently, "just what I told you this morning, that I cannot interfere in my husband's business."

Janet dropped her eyes to conceal a flash of resentment. With this word "business" women of Grace's class muffled their imagination, shut out the call of the weak. Grace could be on the boards of hospitals and nurseries; that kind of sisterhood her creed allowed. She had awakened

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to the needs of women, and was asking for a voice in the conduct of the world of men and women. But she was deaf to this call for justice, because the exercise of it might affect her husband's pocket. All discrepancies in logic and humanity could be bridged by the word "business."

Yet Janet knew that she was not quite fair to Grace. If Grace had been a happy wife, sure of her husband's faithfulness, she might have dared to interfere, she might have let her sense of fellowship to the wives of the strikers rise above that barrier of business. Grace, in her way, by her non-interference, was only doing what any striker's wife was doing—fighting for something precious to her. She was no more free from a great want than they were.

"When I came here," Mrs. Underwood said, "I asked Mrs. Ryder to be a picket. I didn't understand that her husband was such a heavy stockholder in the firm of Levy, Schwartz and Guyon. And yet—" She broke off and looked at Grace, still with that helpless, soft gesture. "It seems as if any mother must want to help."

"I'm sorry," Grace said.

Mrs. Underwood murmured some words of good-by and passed on. The man who had admitted her let her out, his impassive face concealing the fact that he had heard every word of what she had said, and was longing for the moment when he could tell the other servants. He and his kind formed that portion of the parasitic class outside the problems both of the strikers and of the privileged. The servants of the Ryder household were reading about the strike in the newspapers, pleasantly interested in it because a third of the strikers were employed in the factory in which they knew their master had a large financial interest. But the accounts they read were not so real to them as the vaudeville sketches they saw on their days off.

When the door had closed Grace turned to Janet with quivering lips.

"That woman hurt," she said; "she told me about a

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young man she said you knew, Anton somebody, who has a dying wife and four little children, and whose savings have already gone for medicines."

"Sonya Riborsky's older brother," Janet said.

"She must have thought I was a stone," Grace went on, quietly, "if I could hear of those four children and not think of my own four up-stairs. I'm going to give you five thousand dollars for the strikers, Janet. It's to be anonymous, naturally."

Janet pressed her hands.

"I understand, Grace. I'll be glad of the money. May I run up to the nursery?"

"Do go; I should go with you," Grace said, "but I am expecting Harrison every moment. He telephoned that he'd come out directly. He's just back from New York."

Janet went on up-stairs, and Grace passed into the library. She stood looking into the fire, more than a little stricken by the remembrance of Mrs. Underwood's emotion. She had wanted the day to be a tranquil one, for she felt that a good deal depended on this meeting with her husband. She had gone away six months before, feeling that any real relation must be at an end between them. During her absence she had tried to convince herself that she did not care for him at all, and had failed. She had then tried to convince herself that she cared for him so nobly that nothing he did could hurt her, and she had failed in that.

It seemed odd enough that she and Ryder could have been married close to twenty years, could be the parents of four children, and yet could live in such constraint. She knew exactly what her husband thought and felt about most things; she could calculate pretty well on what he was going to say under any given circumstances. This impossibility of surprise had nevertheless not dulled him to her. She cared for him, even if the surface he presented her was a monotonous one. Yet for all this

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knowledge she stood now, timid as a young girl, not knowing just how to meet him.

She caught the whirring of Ryder's car in front of the house. The door opened; she heard him speaking, knew that he had been told where she was. Then he entered the library. For a moment Grace could scarcely lift her eyes.

"Well, here we are, both back," said Ryder, in his raucous voice.

He stood with his plump body tilted a little backward, his full eyes on her face, his heavy jaws relaxed in a smile. Grace knew that he was embarrassed, was waiting for her response. She felt powerless to master the situation. She came forward slowly, her eyes still downcast, and lifted her face to his. Ryder kissed her hastily. Grace wanted to put her arms about his neck; but she, too, was embarrassed. The moment passed, lost, of which she had longed to make so much.

"Children all right?" inquired Ryder, brusquely.

"Very well; they'll be glad to see you."

"I'll run in to them after I've been to my room. I'm badly in need of a change."

Ryder moved toward the door. Grace turned back to the fire. Something in the droop of her figure sent its message to her husband, for in the doorway he paused and said:

"Where'll you be?"

"In my sitting-room," Grace replied.

When he had gone she sat down, trembling. She wished that she had said "in our sitting-room." That would have been a hint to Ryder that she wanted to break down the barrier between them. She could not go on as she had for years. She could not keep her eyes shut, nor could she endure the prospect of living side by side with Ryder, open-eyed. They must come to some understanding. Yet Grace feared to face the understanding.

Ryder, refreshed and re-dressed, went into the nursery.

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Janet was in the midst of a story, the four children at her knee. Their governess had taken advantage of Janet's presence to retreat to her own room. The nurse stood in the background with that faintly jealous regard with which Janet always seemed to inspire her. The little girls smiled at their father, but most politely waited until Janet said:

"Run to your father, ducks. The story can come later."

The little girls threw themselves upon Ryder. He sat down with two of them on his knees, and two standing with their arms about his neck. He was physically uncomfortable, and very happy. His eyes were dimmed as he listened to their chatter of how they had missed him, and what they had seen and done since the elder two had last written him. And Janet, sitting on a foot-stool, watched them and thought of the little children of the strikers, who were lean in food and clothes.

"I know what you're thinking, Janet," he said; "you're thinking that I have no imagination."

Janet colored.

"I am hoping," she said, "that you won't use the word 'business' to me."

That was exactly what Ryder had meant to say, and also that this was a man's matter, and that women had no right to interfere in affairs which they could not understand and could only complicate.

"I am wishing," Janet said, her beautiful voice wistful, "that I had the tongue of the wisest woman among us, for I realize what my present opportunity is. I can count a hundred people concerned with the striker's cause who would give an arm to have this chance to talk to you."

Ryder puffed out his chest complacently. He never quite got over a feeling of pride in his power; evidences of it always flattered him. Unconsciously Janet had made a good opening.

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"You see," he told her, "there's nothing you can say that I don't know beforehand. I've about come to the conclusion that in this world a man can have this feeling of brotherhood you people talk of only for his own family and friends, and for such dependents or objects of charity as his whim dictates. Outside that it's all a cutthroat business; has to be."

"Business," repeated Janet, with a wry smile.

"Well, it's a convenient term to cover up what you would call the brutalities of this human warfare," said Ryder.

The elder two children, seeing that they no longer had their father's attention, unwound their arms from about his neck and sat down at a short distance, whence they surveyed their elders with large, observing eyes. Ryder, still happy, but not yet comfortable, quietly put the younger two children off his knees. His was the kind of stoutness that objects to physical burdens. The little ones, obeying a signal from their nurse, fluttered to the back of the room, whence they, too, watched their father and their cousin. Ryder's power was well understood, even in his nursery. Father must never be disturbed and always instantly obeyed, because it was Father's house.

Ryder, able to breathe freely, leaned back in his chair enjoying the frank exposition of his views that he was making to this attractive girl.

"Ideals and practice are two very different things," he said. "This Christian doctrine of yours is all very well to talk about. Children should be taught it; they can use it with their own families, and when they have found out what the world is they can apply it or not, as suits their convenience. Plenty of people do believe it, and it's a good thing for the business of others that they do. It fits in with the notion of the hereafter as a place where you'll get all that you're missing now. But the world is run on business principles, and the key-note of business is: 'Buy in the cheapest market, and sell in the dearest.'"

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"But you surely cannot deny," Janet protested, "that a new social conscience has awakened in people—"

"I do deny it," said Ryder. "It's simply that the under dog is finding out that he's got a little more power than he thought he had; it's good business for him to try and exert it. It's been good business for the manufacturers to give their people sanitary quarters and shorten the hours of work, because they get better results by it. If you wear out workers too fast, some day the supply won't equal the demand. Besides, it's too much trouble to keep on getting untrained people; it's cheaper not to use up the trained ones so fast. One reason child labor doesn't pay us is that when we've got a child, we've got some one that will probably always be untrained material."

Janet understood that Ryder was taking pleasure in the fact that she doubtless thought his point of view brutal and cynical. Sentimentalists must be instructed. There was something piquant in delivering the instruction with the sense of being well armored against the possibility of ever being an under dog. Money, good health, a devoted wife and family—that was Ryder's luck, to be taken as a striker must take his luck. Janet knew that Ryder was one of those whose imagination had been conventionally trained. He was absolutely incapable of understanding the attitude and service of a man like Wilson, incapable of knowing what real suffering was.

"Ah, I can't say anything that will sound real to you," Janet said, throwing out her hands with a helpless little gesture. "You are so surrounded with the bulwark of business that you and your class have built about you that I can't reach you. If I were to begin to talk about the children of the strikers, you would think me sentimental, and to show me that you weren't you could put your arms about these children and yet listen unmoved to any tale of horror I might speak."

Ryder laughed. Janet had scored again, because she had said what was precisely in his mind.

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"Those strikers can't last," he said. "I'm told by the manager of the factory that one week more will see the end of their resources. We'll have them back then in their old places at the old prices, without the ambition to try that sort of thing for several years. Of course, in time we'll have to do better by them; but they're getting enough for the present."

Janet shook her head.

"You don't understand the temper of those people. If you could see it all! It seems to me like a dream that I was motoring day before yesterday with Grace, and all this going on!"

Ryder had not thought of Grace since he entered the nursery. He must go to her presently. His oldest daughter, taking advantage of the pause in talk, came forward shyly and sat on the floor at his feet. She took his hand in hers and pressed it against her cheek in a tender gesture. Ryder's heart stirred. That was his wife's gesture. Just so, when they had been first engaged, she used to sit at his feet, his hand in hers. He looked down at the soft hair, so like Grace's.

"They're nice children, all four," he said to Janet. "No one else in the Drive has so many."

Ryder spoke with his usual sense of pride.

"Grace has taken a great deal of pains with them," Janet said.

"I suppose you and your friends have appealed to Grace for the strikers, by the route of her own children?" Ryder said.

"Grace made her own choice between loyalties," said Janet, with lowered eyes.

After a moment Ryder understood her. He passed his hand softly over his daughter's hair, and reflected that his wife was indeed loyal. He knew that she had more than once smothered her sympathies in order to be able to think with him, and that even when she had not been able to check her sympathies she had refrained from

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making of him any demands that could show that she differed from him.

"I understand from the papers that the strikers would like to have me consent to arbitration," Ryder said.

If he yielded this to please his wife, and told her so, perhaps that would help bridge over the gulf between them. "If Grace should ask me—" he began.

"Grace won't ask you," Janet said, crisply. She rose and began to draw on her gloves. Ryder rose, too. He looked at her, half smiling.

"I shouldn't wonder if something could be done," he said. "The Jew firms will never yield, but maybe Levy, Schwartz and Guyon might get into the van of progress—all for business, Janet."

She held out her hand, her amber eyes gleaming. Several months before, when she had left Ryder's roof, she had felt that she could never again meet him without constraint. Yet here she stood, her hand in his, liking him because there seemed to be a chance that he would use his power for the good of the forty thousand people whose cause was hers.

They left the nursery together, Janet going down the stairs, while Ryder walked along the hall to his wife's rooms. He met a maid who was carrying to her a vase of roses. Ryder took them, remembering how, about twenty years since, he had ordered those daily flowers to be brought her. Month by month he had sent a check to the florist, with no remembrance of that old tender impulse.

He entered Grace's sitting-room so softly that she did not hear him. She was sitting beside a table, her chin in her hand, her pose wistful. He noticed that she was wearing a gown of his favorite color, and that about her neck was a chain he had given her when they were first married. In another mood he might not have observed these evidences of a wish to please him. Dimly he realized that many times of late years Grace must have made

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those indirect appeals to him, only to have them pass unnoticed.

He stood looking at her with a quick, emotional estimate of the place she really held in his life. She had kept her youth and beauty remarkably; his eight years seniority seemed like twenty. He had always been proud of the place she had made for herself in their world, a place that had a distinction quite apart from their money. She had never annoyed him, never really wearied him. He knew he had hurt her, and that she had borne the hurts like a thoroughbred.

During her absence he had missed her unbelievably, had found his taste for domesticity much stronger than he had supposed. More than that, he had discovered that the borderland of youth was passed; perhaps to try to win it back might be too hazardous. For he had felt that his wife's absence meant that she could not come back to him on the old terms of asking nothing, seeing nothing. Ryder did not quite know where he stood.

He walked toward her, and she looked up. Her eyes were very sad, the eyes of a woman who has seen her happiness drift away from her and has been powerless to regain it. Ryder had intended to go up to her briskly, put the flowers in her lap, kiss her, and say, heartily:

"Grace, if you want me to listen to the strikers, just say so; I'd like to do something big for you."

But at that look all that was best in Ryder came to the surface and spoke clearly. He put the flowers in the nearest chair and, going over to Grace, knelt down heavily beside her and pressed her face against his.

"Oh, Harrie," she cried, "what is the use of all this—money, the children, social consideration—if I haven't you! I don't want anything else!"

Ryder saw himself in the mirror opposite, a man of fifty and looking older, a plain man, a little grotesque, with an awkward figure and full eyes, whose beautiful

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wife loved him for himself and for nothing else. He had never known so humble a moment.

"I wonder if you can understand, Grace," he said, "how a man may forget that he's hurting his wife because he's absorbed in trying to get a last snatch at youth?"

"I may understand, but it doesn't heal the hurt," she murmured.

"Well," Ryder said, with a long sigh, "I've never really loved any woman but you, Grace."

She drew away from him, still showing him sad eyes. He understood that she was asking him to choose between her and whatever casual feminine interests might enter his life. He would not have consented to any such bargain ten years before, and Grace had not then exhausted her powers of endurance; she would not have had the courage then to demand terms.

"Good-by to youth," said Ryder, with another long sigh. "All that's done. You won't leave me again, will you, dear?"

Grace clung to him, the sadness gone, her eyes like a bride's.

"I've never left you, Harrison. You've been in my mind and heart all the time. I've never stopped loving you as if I were twenty. Are you happy?"

Ryder liked being made love to. "Feel bully," he said. Then he added: "I'd like to buy you a shopful of jewelry. Or—Grace, shall I consent to arbitrate with those strikers?"

The bride's eyes changed to a mother's eyes.

"If you only would, Harrison! I'd like to think some other wives in Chicago were being happy through us."

"You're sentimental," teased Ryder. But he did not object to such sentimentality in his own wife. He thought it rather a pretty domestic quality. He rose and lifted Grace to her feet, taking her in his arms, not at all like a man who had been married nearly two decades.

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"Let us have the children to dinner with us to-night," he suggested.

"Very well," agreed Grace; "I feel so happy and abandoned that I don't mind how frightfully we ruin their digestions."

They sat before the fire, hand in hand, absorbed in each other, forgetting that they were creatures of privilege. They were not thinking of the thousands of strikers, only two or three miles away, eating their suppers in dreary rooms, wondering whether the next day would be as gray as the one that was ending. A man of power, pleased at having established agreeable relations with his wife, was going to give a few thousand men and women and children their chance at comfort and happiness.

Janet, walking slowly homeward, was musing over the curious springs in human nature which may lead to ethical conduct.

XXXII

THE LOVERS

SALLIE'S nurse stood at the head of the stairs waiting for Janet. There was a grim look about her mouth as she shook hands.

"I've seen my last of that room," she said, nodding her head toward Sallie's door. "I resigned a week ago, and they've just got some one to take my place. I wouldn't have stood it so long except that I felt sorry for her poor husband."

Janet winced at the word "husband." For some time she had been unable to think of Sallie and Wilson as married—not because Sallie was a hopeless invalid, but because the two were so far apart in aims and standards.

"What surprises me," said the nurse, who was in a quite unscientific temper, "is that she has been able to keep up that deviltry of disposition so long without wearing herself out, as well as the rest of us. She's the only one of us who is fresh. She'll live to be a hundred."

"I am sorry she has worn you out," Janet said, gently; "it's all such a waste."

She passed on to Sallie's room and tapped at the door, entering with a conventionally bright smile which exasperated Sallie. Her wasted face hardened into a scowl.

"Don't come here with that kind of look on your face," she snapped. "I've nothing to be cheerful about, and I don't want any pretenses."

Janet bent over her, but Sallie pushed her away.

"Don't come too close," she said, fretfully.

"I'll put the flowers I have in water," Janet said. She

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busied herself at the table, putting the pale-pink carnations she had brought Sallie beside a sheaf of Killarney roses. Probably those were Ellen Gregory's offering, she thought. Usually only Wilson sent her flowers; the poor little person had no one left to be kind to her, really, except her husband and Janet.

"One good thing, you don't tell me I'm looking well," Sallie said. "You look well yo'self, only ever so much older."

"I feel older," Janet said.

"When did you get back?" inquired Sallie.

"Yesterday, Sallie."

"Dick didn't tell me that," said Sallie, suspiciously.

"Probably I hadn't arrived when he came here," Janet returned.

"Did he know you were comin' yesterday?" demanded Sallie.

"Ada may have told him," said Janet, a trifle stiffly.

She looked at Sallie steadily. She had come to the hospital determined to shut out of her consciousness everything except the fact that her old friend was an invalid and deserving of the tenderest sympathy. There was to be on the one hand no harsh judgment, and on the other no prickings of conscience. Yet within five minutes of her arrival she was feeling hard and hostile toward Sallie.

"Didn't Dick write to you this summer?" asked Sallie.

Janet hesitated. Then she said:

"Yes, Sallie; several of the residents of the Harrogate flats wrote me once or twice during the summer. I believe your husband wrote to Miss Shepherd and Mrs. Underwood when they were away, too. You know we are all like a big family."

"Dick's got no right to a family," flashed Sallie. "If he hadn't driven me into this state he'd have had his own family. What did you all do last night?"

"Last night?" murmured Janet. She averted her

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glance from Sallie's jealous eyes, living over the evening before. After she had left the Ryder house she had walked to the West Side through the crowded lighted streets, all bearing evidence of the strike. She had dined at the settlement café, where the one topic of talk was the strike, the chances of settling it, the aid that must be given the idle work-people. Afterward she had gone home and had joined the other residents in Blair's flat. There she had heard that Wilson's bail had been accepted for Charters and Sonya; that Charters was to be tried for assault, and Sonya for disorderly conduct.

Janet smiled as she recalled the quick, stolen glances the new lovers had exchanged. They had been longing to be alone together, but their love had had to wait on the necessities of the strikers. Both Charters and Sonya were used to giving up what they wanted, and they sat in Blair's rooms with far more patience than Janet would have shown. Her eyes grew grave again as she remembered Wilson's face when he had told her he must see her alone. She had replied, "To-morrow." It was to-morrow now.

"What were you smilin' at a moment ago, and why are you sober now?" asked Sallie.

Janet hesitated. Then, very gently, she told the story of Sonya and Charters, dwelling on Sonya's hard years of work and self-sacrifice, on her dreary youth that had never had any joy till Charters had loved her. If she expected to soften Sallie she failed.

"This here Jew girl isn't the only one in the world that has had to give up love and youth," said Sallie, sharply. "I reckon it's easy enough for those people to fall in love, livin' as you say they do like one big family."

"Love doesn't come so very readily to people that are working as Sonya and Mr. Charters do," Janet said. "What a pretty dressing-jacket you are wearing," she added.

Sallie was not to be diverted.

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"I want Dick to go away from there," she said. "All those women are too friendly with him. And I don't exclude any one, either."

Janet tried to ignore the implication.

"Mr. Wilson feels so badly about your illness that the women and the men both want to do all they can to make things easier for him," she said.

"Why don't you go away, Janet?" Sallie persisted. "Why don't you go back to yo' cousin's?"

"I like it there; my work's there."

"Yo' work!" sneered Sallie. "I reckon you take time away from it. Dick had to admit to me last spring that he was seein' a lot of you."

Sallie had the air of one who had wanted for a long time to deliver home truths to her worst enemy.

Janet rose. "You are a sick woman, Sallie," she said, "and I suppose you are not able to control yourself entirely. But there are limits to what even an old friend will endure from a sick woman. I am going now, and I sha'n't come back till you send me an apology."

Sallie broke into dreadful weeping.

"Go, then," she said. "You hate me; everybody hates me, and wants to get rid of me. How can I tell who Dick may be payin' attention to, and me lyin' he's less here? I wish I were dead!"

Janet went to the door without a backward look. The scene had made her feel ill, and she shuddered to think how many such Wilson had to endure. The fact that her conscience hurt, the fact that poor jealous Sallie was speaking the truth did not temper Janet's disgust.

"Come back," pleaded Sallie; "I'm half mad."

Janet went back and kissed Sallie's forehead.

"I'll forget your—remarks," she said, with effort; "but we can't have any such words again. I think I must go now; you are worn out."

She went away, leaving Sallie no longer weeping, but looking at her resentfully, jealously. Once in the air,

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Janet drew a long breath. November had set in chill and raw. But the nagging and harsh wind, the desolation of the strikers, the growing sense of her own personal problem—anything was better than being with Sallie. A hardness, a resentment as keen as Sallie's own, had possession of her. She forgot her friend's illness, she felt only that the old loyalty and affection had been killed by Sallie's own conduct.

That evening she did not go to Blair's rooms. She knew very well all that would be going on; she had had echoes of it already from Ada. There would be jubilation that Harrison Ryder had met with Wilson and had promised to arbitrate. There would be the planning for reaching this and that firm of tailors and clothiers who would be likely to be influenced by the example of Levy, Schwartz and Guyon. There would be discussion as to means for receiving more money. There would be accounts of the concrete results of the hunger siege in the lives of various strikers. Janet wanted to be free from it all.

At about nine a knock sounded on her door. She opened it to Wilson. He stood looking at her gravely.

"You expected me?" he said.

"I—think so."

"I must speak to you."

"I think we must speak to each other," Janet said, rather brokenly.

"Will you come down to my rooms? Ada may return here at any moment."

Silently they descended the stairs. When they entered Wilson's living-room, Janet said, in a choked voice:

"The little home you made for Sallie!"

"Yes; there's no need to forget that, or to remember it, so far as I can see," returned Wilson.

They sat down, looking at each other. Then Janet lowered her eyes. She tried to think of Sallie and her sufferings; she tried to think of all her old ideals of honor

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and faith. She remembered the zest with which she had taken up her work for woman, and then for the helpless and weak in general, confident that work was all she would ask; that life could never again hurt her, because she would never again expect anything personal.

Again she looked at Wilson. How was he different, after all, from Blair or Charters, or any other man who thought he had a mission in life? Was he greater in any way, except that he had nearly two million dollars which he was dedicating to the services of the helpless? Then she knew that he was a bigger personality than any one else she had ever met, and if he had not been it would have made no difference. She thought of that half-hour of ineffable communion they had held together the day before, that silence that had somehow welded them eternally.

Wilson had not taken his eyes from hers. At last he said:

"You know I still love you?"

"Yes."

"I have thought perhaps that you have come to love me."

Janet hesitated. It was the decisive moment. Again she tried to think of Sallie—but she could see only Sallie's jealous eyes, could hear the tones of her hateful voice. Sallie was no deterrent. She tried again to call on her ideals of self-sacrifice; but she could think only of Wilson and their need of each other.

"I do love you," she said, steadily, "deeply, utterly, as I did not love when I loved before, and as I never can love again."

She spoke almost sternly; there was no shyness or melting in the look she gave him. It was long and grave, almost solemn.

Wilson uttered a deep sigh. He felt as if some heavy weight had been taken from his head. He did not attempt to draw nearer her. He looked at her tenderly and silently for a few moments. Then he said:

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"I was certain that that meeting of ours yesterday, that quiet time we had together, was making me a promise."

He fell into silence; but Janet was always vocative about her emotions.

"This love violates some of my strongest principles," she said, "and some of my keenest instincts. It's wrong to love a married man, and worse still, it's cruel. That was my girlhood view; my experience tells me that it is not only wrong and cruel, but it's unwise."

Wilson made the answer that all men are prone to make under similar circumstances—the world-old reply that has convinced so many women.

"You are talking in general; there are exceptions to every rule, and this is the exception. No two people ever loved as we do."

They were quite sincere in their naïve, glorious belief. Up-stairs in Miss Shepherd's flat Sonya and Charters were expressing the same conviction. They were saying that their love would make them stronger than ever to carry on their work for the disinherited. It was big enough to make Sonya push away for the moment the grief she felt over her mother's death and over her elder brother's dying wife. It was so strong, so they told each other, that they could meet joyously whatever came to them. It was to carry them beyond the merely personal. The sense of unique loving, if it be an illusion, is a glorious one, and upon occasion it can prove itself one of the least wasteful of Nature's devices.

"No man, surely, can have suffered more than you have," said Janet, passionately.

At that he rose to go to her, but something in her eyes held him back. He sat down again.

"It hasn't been easy," he admitted; "but it doesn't matter now. Are you happy?"

"Happy?" mused Janet. "I'm—relieved. I'm at peace. I've stopped fighting. Give me time to realize, and I'll be happy enough."

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Again they were silent, feeling the tenderness of a union which they knew was unspeakably close. Janet rose and, drawing aside the blind, looked down into the gusty street. Across the way the owner of the little delicatessen shop stood staring out of his window, his fat face gloomy. The strike meant for him a greatly reduced trade. Janet could see behind him the dim figure of his wife, a child in her arms. In front of the shop was a little knot of Jewish strikers, gesticulating, arguing with one of their number. Perhaps he was weakening, Janet reflected; maybe he wanted to go back to work. Two or three children played aimlessly at a game. Janet guessed that home was none too welcome a place for them, with their father out of work and gloomy, and their mother afraid of the future and irritable.

She turned and spoke to Wilson.

"It doesn't seem as if we ought to admit our love for each other when people want food," she said. "I yield to love, but I have a sense of—of wrong."

"If our loving or not loving would increase the quantity of bread—" Wilson said.

Janet turned back to the window. The keeper of the delicatessen shop had withdrawn his gaze from the street and was speaking to his wife, evidently reproaching her because the child was crying. A policeman was drawing briskly near the knot of animated strikers. His smug air, his comfortable clothes, his sense of superiority because, representing the law, he had full right of interference, irritated Janet. Down the street toward the men came two women, one weeping bitterly, the other trying to comfort. They joined the group and told some tale, doubtless of domestic calamity, for one of the strikers threw up his thin arms with a helpless gesture that was oddly tragic, expressing, as it did, a wordless grief and a strange kind of scorn for sublunary matters.

Janet went back to her chair.

"Ah," she said, "there is so much sorrow! Surely our

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little drop of joy need not be withheld! I can't face life any more without your love."

"You have loved me—how long?" Wilson asked, in a yearning tone.

"Since June, I think, though I would have denied it then," she said.

"Then we've lost four months," he said. He held out his arms; but she shook her head.

"Wait a moment," she said, dropping her eyes. "There is Sallie to talk of—a sick, helpless woman who loves you."

"I don't think she loves me any more," Wilson said, sadly. "She is eaten up with hatred of everything and everybody."

"She hates me," Janet murmured; "I think she guesses."

Wilson shook his head, as if trying to push away an unbearable thought. "She's uncanny," he said.

He did not mean to tell Janet that from the very beginning of her illness Sallie had tormented him with her jealousy. She had first accused him of having ceased to love her because she was sick, and then of loving some one else. "Who are you thinking of," she had cried, "when your eyes get that far-away look?" Often enough he had been thinking of no one, had only been trying to shut out the sad sight of her wasted little face. But her words had always thrust Janet into his mind. Of late weeks Sallie had openly accused him of loving Janet.

"The worst element in the whole situation," Janet said, slowly, "is that I don't think I could ever have admitted to you that I love you, if only Sallie had been sweet and patient. It's her rancor which has killed my sense of loyalty to her. Yet I ought to be loyal; poor Sallie's right in you is just as great and should be just as inviolable as if she were not driving herself insane."

Wilson compressed his lips in a bitter line.

"I've gone all over that," he said. "Logic and reason—

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ableness don't seem to matter. I'm not saying whether it is right or wrong to love you, to want you to love me. I'm just saying that I do, that I can't help it, that I don't want to help it. I stopped struggling months ago. Since then I've determined to get you in my life if I could."

"I stopped struggling only to-day," sighed Janet.

Wilson hesitated; then he rose and stood looking down into her eyes.

"What are we going to do with our lives?" he asked. "Have you thought of that yet?"

Janet did not pretend to misunderstand him. She looked at him with a troubled gaze, and said, slowly:

"I'll think now, if you'll go back to your chair and sit down. I couldn't think if you put your arms about me—as I want you to."

Wilson bit his lip and sighed shudderingly. Then he said:

"I love you so much that I'll do just as you say. I want you in any way you can give yourself to me. I've fought it all out. Sallie needn't know. We sha'n't hurt her. We need each other."

Their need of each other was the compelling force in the whole situation, Janet knew. She looked about the little living-room that had been furnished for Sallie. There was only one light in a far corner; its reflection threw gleams on the polished mahogany chairs, brought out the color of the books on the shelves, and made the glass over the pictures glow dimly. From without they could hear the subdued thundering of an elevated train; nearer were the excited voices of some Italians, doubtless discussing the one vital subject of the strike.

It all seemed very far away and unusual to Janet—all except Wilson sitting in the great chair which had been chosen with no regard for Sallie's taste. As she looked at the long, loose-knit figure, at the thin hands clenched on his knee, at the gaunt line of his cheek, she felt that nothing mattered but him. Everything else had receded,

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was as remote as some dim background in a dream. Though Wilson had blotted out the world, their love had not brought the shining joy she wanted.

"Ah, it's not right," she said to him; "we ought to be able to go out into the world and say to every one, 'This is our love; it is big; we have been chosen for this.'"

He smiled at her unconscious egotism.

"We pay for everything. This is a great love. Aren't you loyal enough to it to give whatever tax it exacts?"

"I am loyal to it," she said, ardently. "I don't even ask why we couldn't have loved each other in Wisconsin, because I know we weren't big enough then, and so we loved the wrong people. This is real."

"Yes," he said; "the other loves were just mistakes, just the expression of an emotion that was trying to find itself."

"I wonder," said Janet, in sudden bitterness, "whether thousands of married men haven't said just that to girls?"

He looked at her, hurt.

"Don't you trust me, Janet?"

"Oh yes, yes!" she said. "I'm only wishing there were some way of marking a real love, so that the world could recognize it, and, for the sake of its reality, forgive its lawlessness."

"You know what I wish we could do, Janet?" he said. "I wish we could be married now, and live out our lives like the rest of the married world. I shall never love any one but you. In my heart you are my wife."

She thrilled to the word "wife," and swayed toward him. Then she closed her eyes and looked away from him.

"This is what I am thinking of, Richard," she said; "the secrecy of our relation, whatever form it takes."

"What form is it going to take?" he asked. He came over and bent over her chair; she felt his breath on her cheek. She looked up at him gravely.

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"I want it now to be as if we were engaged, Richard," she said.

He drew her to her feet, and stood holding her at arm's length, looking into her eyes.

"I can do whatever you say now," he said; "but I warn you, I don't know how long it will last."

She felt his fingers throbbing against her wrists; her own heart beat fast, and it was all she could do to speak steadily.

"It can last as long as most engagements last, can't it?" she asked.

"Perhaps so—yes."

Suddenly he drew her into his arms. She felt his heart against her arm; she felt him trembling. He pressed his lips to her hair, and whispered:

"I won't urge you—only, why are you deciding this way? Sallie may be as she is for years."

Janet broke away from him.

"Let me tell you while I have the courage," she said, "and then you must help me. I don't like an irregular relation. People always guess. So far in this house people have considered us only as friends; but we'll be sure to betray ourselves; they will soon suspect that we love each other. You can't keep things like that from people. They've all known for a long time of Sonya's love for Jimmy Charters. Without a word having been said, they all guess that yesterday those two came to an understanding. You and I will intend to be scrupulously careful, and yet, sooner or later, they'll know."

"What if they do?" he said. "What is the worst that can happen?"

Janet looked at him hauntingly. She had analyzed her own feelings thoroughly. She knew, too, that she might have made a better fight against her love for Wilson if she had not been living in an atmosphere where sex problems were fully discussed, and where it was somehow not incompatible for a man to have a passion for serving

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the poor, and yet to be incapable of sex faithfulness to any one woman. Months before, when Wilson had told her he loved her, she had been at first incensed at his faithlessness to the girl to whom he was engaged. Had he been married then and made his declaration, she would have felt insulted and humiliated. She knew that it was largely her love for Wilson that made her listen to him now; but that she could listen was also in part due to the liberal views of the people she lived among.

"Richard," she said, in rather a cynical tone, "I don't think they'd mind it if you and I lived together. They might even enjoy the situation. Their code is not to inquire into people's affairs. They wouldn't say a word outside—perhaps not to one another. But they'd know, and somehow I don't want them to know. If our deepest relation, our love, has to be a secret from most people, I'd like it to be a secret from every one."

"But you've just said they'd guess," Wilson pointed out, "no matter what our arrangements are."

"I know," Janet said, helplessly.

Wilson walked over to the window. The street was very quiet. Many of the houses were dark, for the strikers were as chary of using light as they were of using food. Behind those darkened windows, nevertheless, there were legitimate homes. A man could claim his wife before the world. Wilson turned and looked at Janet, almost pityingly. He thought he understood her better than she understood herself. Her hesitation was only self-deception; she was afraid of a closer relation than the one she proposed. She would not face the fact that after months or weeks of their present union the fear would be gone and she would come to him fully. A wave of chivalrous devotion swept over him, lulling his passion, leaving him with a tender, deep wistfulness.

Janet came to him slowly.

"It— isn't easy for me, Richard," she said. "All that

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we can have is so incomplete, just because it goes against all that I used to hold most sacred."

She wept softly. She wanted the overmastering, full joy that love should bring, and it was lacking. She rested her head against Wilson's shoulder, and he bent his cheek to her hair. Then she put her arms about his neck and their lips met.

XXXIII

JANET'S CHOICE

CHRISTMAS had passed with the strike only partially settled. The factory of Levy, Schwartz and Guyon, which employed the greatest proportion of the forty thousand strikers, had yielded a good deal to them and taken them back without exception. Some of the smaller clothing firms had followed this example, but others were obdurate. Thus many people were still out of work. The unions were taking care of them as well as they could. There were enough cases of destitution to engage the full sympathies of the residents of the Harrowgate Apartments. The strike had united the members of this large family more closely than ever. Scarcely an evening passed when they did not meet to give one another the various incidents of a full day.

Janet hoped that the burning subject of the strike had diverted the attention of her friends from Wilson and herself. They saw each other for brief intervals half a dozen times a day, and sometimes these stolen moments were joyous to Janet, and often they were bitter. There were times when it was deliciously sweet to step into Wilson's flat and spend a half-hour with him in the tenderest talk, and then go up to Blair's flat, and when Wilson entered later, merely give him a casual glance. There were other times when it was hard to leave him, hard to sit up-stairs without daring to exchange a look which might show their group that they were lovers.

That Ada suspected Janet was sure. She knew it by her friend's punctilious silence on the subject, and by her

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increasing gravity. More than once Ada had surprised Janet and Wilson together, hands or shoulders touching. At first Janet had felt distressed, but as the weeks had passed she had grown indifferent. She was too much concerned with her love to care how it affected any one whom she could trust as fully as she could Ada.

It was the afternoon of her twenty-fourth birthday. In the old days a birthday had always seemed important to Janet. It was the beginning of a new year, and might bring her many sorts of glorious adventures, one or all of which were sure to lead up to the beloved. Now there was but one thing she wanted—the right to claim Wilson as her own. It was the beginning and end of every wish she had. For, indeed, Janet had not changed very much. She was absorbed now as before in loving; but Gregory she had loved as an untutored young girl loves; and Wilson she loved as a woman loves, with much of a woman's knowledge of what love costs, and with an increasing willingness to pay whatever price she must.

She had not seen Wilson since early in the morning. He had stood outside the door of the flat, and had explained hurriedly that he had had a telephone call from the hospital; they wanted him to come over at once, but had not said why. He would return as soon as he could, and they would spend the day together as they had planned. Ever since she had been waiting for him. It struck her as an ironic kind of justice that this birthday, which was to have been his holiday and hers, should have gone, after all, to poor Sallie.

A knock sounded, and she lifted her head sharply. No; it was not Wilson's knock. She opened the door to Blair.

"Oh, you," she said, smiling faintly. "Come in. Ada isn't back yet."

"I'll have to put up with you, then, won't I?" he said, whimsically.

She smiled absently, and Blair reflected that for a long

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time she had treated him much as a young girl treats a married man. He wondered if it was because she unconsciously assumed that he was Ada's friend rather than hers. It was not Blair's intent to be considered the particular friend of any woman. He was unaware of the fact that when he was especially in need of quick understanding or of sympathy it was Ada to whom he turned. When he wanted to be amused or flattered, he turned to a younger woman, preferably Janet. Ada did not always give him what he sought, but when she failed him it was because she chose to, not because she could not help herself.

Janet, recently, had not given him anything he wanted. As he sat down in the Morris chair Ada always reserved for him, Blair recalled that Janet had of late appeared more or less distraught, as if perhaps her heart were not in her work. He wondered if she had lost interest in the mean streets and their freight of handicapped humanity. After all, would she wear well? By that Blair really meant, had she got tired of him? Was she incapable of appreciating his willingness to aid in her development?

"What have you been doing all day?" she asked him, with a palpable effort to be interested.

"The usual thing," he returned; "seeing striker after striker. One of my stenographers left me to-day. She said she couldn't stand the line of beaten people that came in to my offices day after day, and she was taking a place as a public stenographer in a hotel. Well, she'll see only the prosperous there."

"You don't quite get used to it yourself," Janet said.

"No, I shouldn't want to," Blair returned. "As soon as a man lets his feelings harden he stops being able to see straight; he inhibits his usefulness."

"Perhaps Sonya can take that girl's place," suggested Janet.

"I thought of that. I can pay her a little more than she is getting, and heaven knows she needs every penny she can earn for her brother Anton's family."

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Sonya had returned to her former work of stenography, and was using her salary to buy medicines for her brother's dying wife and food for his four children. She had left Miss Shepherd's flat, and had gone to live in Anton's rooms, where she was serving both as mother and as breadwinner. Sonya took the double toil bravely. Did not Charters love her? That wonderful happiness transfigured everything the girl did, rendered easy any difficulty. With all her heart Janet envied Sonya; here was some one who had the right to trumpet her love to her friends, and who would find none who did not wish her good speed.

"I saw Anton this afternoon," Blair went on. "Do you know, I think the fellow is going crazy! He walks up and down the streets, muttering and gesticulating. He has appointed himself a picket in front of that place he used to work in—Meyer and Friedman's, I think it is. Two or three times in his pleading he has laid his hands on the arms of the scabs. That's a technical offense, you know; I had to bail him out for it yesterday."

"There ought to be a law to disregard what a Russian Jew does with his hands," remarked Janet. "He can't control them any more than he can his eyelids."

A flash of animation lit her face. For a moment all her old vividness came back. Then her expression grew lifeless, and she sighed heavily. It struck Blair that a great deal of her old charm had passed. It had not passed, but it was in retreat, showing itself only to Wilson. Only he could call her to real life; for every one else she was merely so many pounds of mechanical flesh and mind.

"Charters told me to-day," remarked Blair, "that he and Sonya were going to be married as soon as the strike is definitely over. It will be a grand symbolic celebration. Well, they deserve to be happy, and I believe they will be."

Janet hesitated; then she said:

"You didn't advise them both to disregard the ring and

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the book? You didn't tell them that love should be free, and if they were destined to belong to each other forever, they would do so without any legal chaining?"

Blair looked at her sharply.

"Oh, come!" he said. "They both know what I think. I've never tried to force people to my views; I've only laid my ideas before them."

"I wonder," mused Janet.

"What! You wonder if I haven't tried to force my views down people's throats?" said Blair.

"No; I—wonder if you aren't right," Janet murmured.

"Ah!" said Blair, softly.

Janet looked up, coloring deeply. The set look died out of her face, and the soft girlishness behind it came out appealingly. She had blushed because she felt that her remark was almost tantamount to a declaration of her feeling for Wilson. But Blair took it to mean that the imperviousness which had turned aside all his attempts to increase her liberality of vision was giving way.

He drew a long breath and pushed his chair a little nearer hers, putting down the cigar he had lighted. Tired out with the strenuous work of the past week, brain-sick and heart-sick with the countless problems he was asked to solve, he was in the mood for relaxation. Janet had always interested him; if she had slipped out of his life during the summer and autumn, it was only because he had been deeply preoccupied with the strike. He was sufficiently elastic to give her back her old place. It was a place several women had occupied, not always to their own peace of mind. Blair was past forty, and it was some time since he had seen a girl with brains and charm enough to make him wish to lead her to a full appreciation of his own rather pagan views about the fundamentals of life. He was not exactly in love with Janet, but he was on that dangerous verge, not uncommon to men of his age, of losing his head over a girl twenty years his junior. She seemed suddenly very desirable to him.

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He forgot his belief of a few minutes before that her charm had diminished.

"The greatest thing in the world," said Blair, thrillingly, "is for two people to give themselves to each other for love, and love only. What takes the spaciousness out of love is the binding. It makes it mean, petty, exacting. When love is free it grows, if it's real; it grows and it brings out the best there is in a man and a woman—the best in mind and body both."

Janet turned her earnest eyes upon him.

"Does that spacious love bring a woman peace?" she sighed.

She longed for peace. She felt that she would have been willing to take almost any step if its irrevocableness would only do away with restlessness and even torment.

"Peace?" repeated Blair. "Such a love will bring a couple everything they'd get in an ordinary marriage, and a great deal more besides."

He spoke a little lamely. If such unions were to be tested by the criterion of a woman's peace, he supposed he would have to modify his generalizations.

"I'm not saying," he added, "that most people are fit for such a relation. I advocate marriage for the herd. As society is constituted to-day, it is only to the big-minded that I should suggest my test of free love. Sonya and Charters are big enough for it."

"I don't suppose anything but marriage ever occurred to them," said Janet, simply.

Unconsciously Blair realized that his conversation had taken on an expository tone rather than an emotional tone.

"There is something beautiful," he said, softly, "in the life of a man and woman together when it is governed only by their need of each other. Think of them in the woods together, in an environment as free as themselves! Think of them, perhaps, over a camp-fire, looking up at the immemorial stars!"

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Janet thought of herself and Wilson walking along some star-lit road, and suddenly she wanted his arms. Her face struck fire with her quick longing; then it grew remote and alien. She rose, saying to Blair:

"You don't mind if I leave you, do you? I have to go out. I am sure Ada will be back presently."

Blair looked decidedly dashed. He lighted a cigar while she put on her wraps. She nodded to him absently as she left the flat. She went down to Wilson's rooms, where she impatiently threw off her hat and coat. If she could not be with Wilson, she would wait for him between these dear walls where he lived. It was intolerable to talk to Blair when she could be thinking of the man she loved. She glanced at the clock on his book-case. Strange that anything should keep him away from her on her birthday.

Six o'clock had struck before he entered with a dragging step.

"Ah, you're tired," she said, going to him with her arms outstretched.

"I knew I should find you here," he returned.

He bent and kissed her perfunctorily and then passionately, holding her close, as if he could never let her go.

"Oh, I need you so!" he cried.

She led him to the big chair and sat upon the arm of it, where she could lean over and press her cheek against his hair. She knew that something had gone wrong, and that in his own time he would tell her. Now she could comfort him best by her reserve.

"I should have come back to you two hours ago," he said; "but I couldn't. I've been walking, walking."

"Yes, dear; I know," she murmured.

"It's Sallie," he said, after a time. "She had another stroke this morning."

"Ah!" breathed Janet.

"A bad one. She—she can't move anything now but her eyes, Janet. And how she looked at me! Janet, it

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was a dreadful thing to have her eyes, so baleful, so full of hate, staring and staring, and following me about the room."

He shuddered like a child. Janet put her lips to his cheek and took his hands in hers.

"I think she can understand what we say to her," he went on. "We asked her to close her eyelids if she could. She did not move them; but I think, poor girl, it was only because she wouldn't."

"Ah yes," sighed Janet.

Poor Sallie would take the only revenge she could—that of exerting the one bit of opposition of which she was capable.

"She may live years in this state," groaned Wilson, "having to be fed like a baby, with no relief of speech. How will she bear it! Janet, somehow it makes me feel almost blood-guilty. If you could have seen her eyes!"

Janet knew well what the effect of those eyes would have been, and she resolved never to see Sallie again. If she did see her she knew that all that was merciful and self-sacrificing in her would awake; she was afraid that she would take a resolve to leave Wilson and never be with him again so long as Sallie's baleful eyes were open upon the world. She put her arms close about Wilson. Then she slipped upon his knees, her body closer to him than it had ever been.

"This can't go on," she said.

He understood.

"I had almost resolved to tell you we should separate," he said, hoarsely. "I feel like such a traitor to that poor girl—"

"You're mine," said Janet, intensely. "I'm yours; all of me!"

"My wife?" he whispered.

"Your wife," she said, firmly.

"When?" he asked.

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"We'll go away to-morrow, if you like. Or we'll stay here. I'll never be parted from you after to-morrow."

Wilson sighed deeply, like a man who throws off a heavy physical weight.

"I don't know whether I'm behaving like a beast to her or not. I don't know whether I'm right or wrong. I only know that I need you. It's you who are my wife. Every loyalty I have in the world, all my love, is yours. It is a cheap thing to say I would die for you. I want to live for you. Don't you know I'll always live for you, Janet? Say you know it."

"I'm your mate," she said; "you will never love any one but me."

For a long time neither spoke. Then Wilson asked, tenderly:

"Are you happy?"

"I'm happy, and I'm at peace," said Janet. "I don't care what this costs now, or later; I've got to do it. If you need me, then my duty is—just you."

"My Janet," he murmured.

They did not embrace; they sat together in still, restful peace, glad that their long struggle was over. At last Wilson asked:

"Have you—thought the thing out?"

"Oh, I don't know what you mean by thinking it out," said Janet. "I've argued for a long time on both sides, if you mean that. But it took to-night to show me that something bigger than my will has given me to you."

"Yes, beloved, I understand that," he said. "I merely meant—will you come here to me, or shall we go away—" he hesitated.

"Oh, I'm not asking you to give up your work here, if you mean that," Janet said.

"I should have been ready to live abroad if you had asked it," he said.

"Oh, would you do that for me?" cried Janet. But even as she said it she knew Wilson would not have

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wanted to leave his work, even for her; and she received her first chill of fear.

"I'd do anything you asked," he said.

She crooned with joy, and her confidence came back; yet something was lacking. She had to push away that looming thought that perhaps his work was more to Wilson than his love, or at least that his love alone wouldn't be enough for him.

"We must decide what we shall do about telling people," she said.

"Yes," Wilson agreed.

"I want Ada to know," Janet said; "but no one else. Oh, of course, they'll suspect. I wish I dared move down here openly with you; but I can't. I can't on account of Father and Cousin Lilius—and Grace Ryder. I don't want to hurt them."

"I doubt if the owner of the Harrowgate would permit it," Wilson said.

"I hate the secrecy," said Janet, brokenly; "but it can't be helped."

He drew her close.

"My darling, I'll give you back your promise, if you think it's going to hurt too much."

"It's giving you up that would hurt too much," whispered Janet. "I'm going to try not to let the secrecy matter; I'm going to ignore the looks or the guesses of our friends. I'm going to be happy—happy—happy—" Her voice broke.

"Oh, my brave Janet!"

She lay in his arms, weeping softly. She was thinking how sweet it would be if they could really be married. She would have welcomed all the details of a relation which would bear the light of full day—the congratulations of friends, the preparing of the home, the silent understanding she would share with other young wives. But she resolved to be happy in what she could have.

JANET'S CHOICE

"We'll go away somewhere to-morrow afternoon for a day or two," Wilson said.

"Yes," Janet returned.

She understood that he felt that now he must be more than ever assiduous in his attention to Sallie; he must see her every day.

"Then we shall have to let the future take care of itself," he said. "Janet, can you trust the future?"

"Since it is with you," she said.

"There's no need for me to tell you, Janet," he said, "that you are the only woman in the world for me. There never can be any one else. Surely, between us, there need be no assurance that we shall belong to each other till death parts."

"No need for words," she said.

Again they were silent, knowing once more the ineffable serenity of spirit that had been theirs when Janet had returned in the autumn, and when, with no explanation, they had surrendered their hearts to each other.

XXXIV

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JANET slept little that night. She lay wide-eyed, as remote from all about her that was concrete as if it had been some dim unreality. It was the last night of her girlhood. Never again would she belong wholly to herself. Never again would she have a girl's thoughts; her lover would lead her into the kingdom of a woman, and a woman's kingdom is always the conquered country of a man. All the tender submissions, all the close loyalties, all the soft dependence Janet was prepared to give. And she told herself that in their rarest hours there would be no question of the title of wife and husband; they would be just two mates, born for each other, so close that they could forget the world. It was by those rarest hours that Janet meant to live.

The night went on in its white quietude. Outside the wind whipped about the windows. Sometimes she could hear a lonely footstep on the snow; occasionally somewhere in the building a child cried. Then Janet covered her eyes with her hands; she envied any woman who dared have a child to lie on her breast and look up at her with the eyes of the man she loved. After the hushing of such crying, the night was more silent than ever. It seemed to enfold Janet, to bend over her with long suspirations. Later on the night began to stir. A wagon or two rumbled past; the milkman clinked his rounds from flat to flat. Then the feet of workmen sounded, leaving their homes and treading the familiar street. The voices of women rose as they set about their morn-

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ing work. The pink dawn broke, and the day had come when Janet was to go to her mate.

She got up and dressed, and prepared breakfast for herself and Ada. When the meal was over, she glanced at Ada in a puzzled fashion.

"What's the matter?" asked Ada. "You look as if you had forgotten something."

They were in the living-room, and Ada was straightening the books and magazines on the table.

"No, I've not forgotten anything," Janet said, slowly; "I'm just wondering how to tell you something."

Ada sat down and clasped her hands tightly.

"It's not—about Dick Wilson?" she asked.

Janet nodded.

"Don't do it!" cried Ada, passionately. "Oh, don't do it, Janet!"

"I'm going, to-day," Janet said.

"Not to-day!" said Ada. "You haven't had time to think."

"I've had time to suffer all I can bear," Janet said.

"We love each other—and I think no two could care more than we do. The situation is intolerable."

"Wait!" cried Ada. "You will only put yourself in another situation more intolerable."

"Nothing could be worse than this," Janet said; "and when we belong to each other I believe that things will be a great deal better. Richard will be happier, at any rate."

"And you'll pay for his happiness with your heart's blood," Ada warned her.

"Then I'll pay," said Janet.

She sat down opposite Ada, and looked at her steadily. Ada had the effect of gathering together all her forces for a conflict. Janet was determined to resist.

"There must be something that will appeal to you," Ada said. "Where is your mercy to his wife?"

"She is no wife to him. She hates him, and he loves

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me. She'll not know. We rob her of nothing, and we must think of mercy to ourselves."

"If he can turn from a helpless wife to you," Ada went on, "how can you trust him?"

Janet laughed a little.

"Ah, Ada! My Richard is not like other men."

Ada made a gesture of despair. "How you have changed in less than a year!" she exclaimed. "When Ryder made his proposal to me you were horrified, and yet you are going to do the same thing."

"It's not the same thing," Janet retorted. "A relation like ours is to be tested by the character of the two people who enter into it."

Ada began to pace up and down the room.

"If you only knew the hundreds of girls and women who have said just that, and lived to know it meant nothing!"

"I sha'n't repent," Janet said. "If Richard cared for society, if he valued the conventions which make the opinion of one's fellows, I should hesitate. But he cares only for his work and for me. So I shall always make him happy."

"That's just it," Ada said, desperately; "you won't make him happy. You think you will always feel this way; but you won't. I tell you—"

A knock came at the door, and Blair's voice asked:

"Can you let me have a package of those Russian cigarettes, Ada? I want to put about three nails in my coffin on the way down-town."

Ada opened the door wide.

"Come in here, Charles," she said, tensely.

She led him into the living-room and closed the door. "He shall help convince you, Janet," Ada said, in a shaken voice. "I'll fight to save you, as I wish to God some one had fought to save me. Seven years ago," she went on, in a low, keen tone, "I was living in just such an apartment as this, and my neighbor was Charles Blair. I was restless and full of life, and looking for something to satisfy

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my many wants. No one worth while had asked me to marry him, and I hated the dull, monotonous work of social secretary, where I had to look on at gaieties in which I could no longer take part. Then Charles began to pour into my mind the arguments that have helped to sap your morality, Janet, and what's worse, your common sense—"

"Look here, Ada," interrupted Blair, angrily.

Ada turned to him fiercely.

"If you think we are even, you and I, Charles," she said, "you are mistaken. You've got to listen, and you've got to help. She's going to Wilson—Janet. I say she shall hear what I paid first."

Blair sat down heavily, with vague, astonished face. He had an odd sense that he had somehow been cheated.

"Janet, if Charles hadn't preached free love to you—" Ada began.

"It would have made no difference in the world," said Janet, composedly; "sooner or later I'd have come to this."

Blair stared at her, and into his eyes came a quick, speculative gleam, and then an expression at which Janet stiffened. It was a look which definitely put her on a lower level in Blair's mind, a look which seemed to appraise her fleshly charms, which made her, somehow, feel half clad. For all his liberal theories Blair had enough of the conservative male element to value less the woman who would give herself without the legal bond. Janet resented the look, but it terrified her. What if Wilson could ever feel that way! But no—but no, she told herself; he was different from all others.

Ada took up her story.

"I was lonely, hungry for love," she said. "Charles had left his wife; but he was not free. To do him justice, I don't think he would have bound himself again if he had been free. But he wanted me, and I—went to him. You haven't gone through reasoning that I haven't gone through, Janet, and you will pay, as I paid."

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Janet lowered her eyes.

"I know what you are thinking," said Ada, acutely; "you are thinking that Charles didn't love me as Dick loves you. Well, no one can measure love, but I assure you Charles made me believe that no man had ever loved a woman as he loved me."

Blair shuffled his feet uneasily. No man whose love has died cares to be reminded of what it was like when its ardor was keenest. Moreover, Blair was not without a sense of the ridiculous. He foresaw where the situation was going to lead him. Like most men, he shrank from strong emotion, unless it was of a gratifying kind which he had chosen to call forth. Above all, he objected to being in a situation which he had not created or which he could not master. But Ada's intensity was compelling. He looked at her almost sullenly, but he did not interrupt her.

"I want to be absolutely fair to Charles," Ada continued. "His theories interested me because they were new to me, because I saw their daring, and because—well, because they awakened in me curiosities, desires, which I could not have allowed myself to face had my mind still been shrouded with the ordinary conventions and—well, decencies with which we protect the minds of unmarried women. And so—Charles converted me. He really thought I had accepted his views, and so did I. We were both honest enough."

Ada paused, and again Janet was aware that her friend was gathering up all her forces, was filled with a burning determination to force her points home and to win. Janet felt like an unconcerned spectator. She was interested, indeed, but it was as if what Ada was saying had nothing to do with her. She wondered in a detached way why she had not guessed what the relations between Ada and Blair had really been; she had supposed they had merely had, like Gregory and herself, the experience of a broken engagement. Janet had gone so far along the

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perilous road of the flesh that it struck her that she had been rather naïve not to have understood.

"Let me tell you how it all turned out," Ada said. "I was uncloudedly happy for perhaps a month. And then, Janet, I found out what a woman is really like. She wants to possess her man. She wants to feel that his love mustn't be free, but it must be bound to her as long as she lives. She cannot believe that her own love would change, and she does not believe that his should change. I saw that I could not accept all those theories I thought I had accepted. I don't believe one woman in a million can. Here and there you may find one, perhaps, who does. Examine her, and you see she is a beautiful, heartless vampire, capable of passion, but not of real love, with no real mother-instinct, no talent for loyalty or service. She's not the kind of woman a good man could love for very long—even a polygamous good man."

Again Blair shuffled in his chair and darted her a sulky glance.

"Charles doesn't believe me," Ada said. "He merely thinks I wasn't big enough to stand his test. He thinks that our tragedy or comedy, whichever you like to call it, was caused by the fact that he was mistaken in gaging my greatness of spirit. He believes that there are plenty of women in the world, big-minded and big-souled, with mother-hearts, who could enter into such a relation, go through it as long as it lasted without heart-burnings or jealousies, and, when the man grew tired, say good-by serenely, with gratitude for the glorious hours that had been!"

Ada was almost at the point of tears. Blair turned away his head uneasily, while Janet said, in a low tone:

"Ada dear, I know why you are telling me this. But don't you see? The cases are so different. Richard doesn't believe in free love. He knows he could never love any one but me."

Ada threw out her arms passionately.

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"And don't you suppose there were times when Charles told me that he could never love any one but me?" she cried. "There are moments when a man will say anything to a woman! It's true to him just while he says it; but she wants it to be true forever."

Blair rose.

"Look here, Ada," he said, "this is no affair of mine—"

"Sit down, Charles, please," Ada said. "You owe me at least this—I've got to save Janet if it can be done. Oh," she added, bringing her hands to her eyes, "you make me feel so helpless, Janet. It's as if I were beating against a wall of rock, and I'm pouring out what was the agony of years for your sake."

Then, indeed, was Janet touched.

"Dear Ada, I do appreciate your love and care," she said.

"Then listen—then don't be so hard!" cried Ada. "If only I could make the words burn into you as the experience did into me! If only I could make you see that in the end Dick will be as Charles was!"

Janet smiled sadly and yet triumphantly. Why could not Ada see the difference between the two men?

"When I first saw I could not accept Charles's theories," Ada said. "I was still happy, for I was sustained by my vanity. He seemed to love me so much that I was sure that no other woman could take him away from me. And then—all my defenses fell away from me, one by one. There were the secret meetings, the fear that some one would find out. You don't know what a support it is to your certainty of a man to know that the world counts him yours."

"Ah, don't I know!" breathed Janet.

"You do know? Then let me tell you that a legal right binds a man's own love closer about a woman, makes him feel that he belongs. The home in common is a help—all the little things that you own in common, all the hours of the day when you both have a right to

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those things. It's destructive to the bond to have him slipping into your flat at safe hours, or you into his. It was so with Charles and me; it would be so with you."

Janet's expression said that it would not be true if the two cared enough.

"There isn't much more to say," Ada went on, wearily, "only this: If the woman cannot be happy in a situation like that, the man soon finds it out. She is obsessed by the conviction that she belongs to him and he doesn't belong to her. If he doesn't come when she expects him she wonders where he is, suspects that his love is dwindling, is afraid there is some other woman. A wife doesn't feel that way without cause. She knows that the fact that her man is legally mated protects him from the majority of other women. But the man who is not bound is always fair game to any one. I grew jealous, nervous; I was miserable, and I couldn't make Charles happy. It lasted not three years, and for more than two I was in torture, varied only by a few hours here and there of happiness. Charles has never understood. I don't think any man of his type would. He merely saw that I was not living up to our ideals, and it irritated him. He didn't see why I should suffer, and because he didn't see why, that minimized to him my suffering. He seemed to think I could have helped it if I wanted to."

Ada paused. Then she went close to Janet and took her hands.

"And now, dear Janet," she said, "I am going to tell you the vital truth, the thing that ought to make your relation with Dick impossible. You think that no man could be so noble as Dick. You believe he will love no one but you. That may be true. He may be faithful to you always."

"He will," said Janet, proudly.

"But in one respect he will be exactly like Charles. Charles is noble, too, Janet, even if he cannot be bound to any one woman. Janet, if you give yourself to Dick

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Wilson in this way you will lose his respect. You will! You will! He won't feel it at first, and he will never admit it to you, but the fact that you yielded yourself to him against the rulings of society will lower you in his eyes."

"It's not true! It's not true!" cried Janet.

"I tell you, it is true," said Ada, intensely. "A high-minded man like Wilson instinctively respects the long experience of a civilization which has resulted in this marriage law to protect the wife, the home, and the children. The day will come when, for all Dick's appreciation of your generosity in giving yourself for love, he will esteem your character less because you did not have the highest kind of self-control, the highest kind of self-abnegation. When he esteems you less he will love you less. Both of you will, meantime, have felt the strain of the secrecy, and that will have worn on your nerves. The first exaltation of your love will be gone. There won't be children to bind you together, for you won't dare have children. And that's a blow to love and pride and self-respect—not to dare to have children. You won't be happy! My little Janet, you won't be happy any more."

Ada's voice broke. Janet covered her face with her hands and sat shaken but obstinate. Ada clasped her hands together with a helpless gesture. Then she went to Blair and put her hands softly on his shoulders.

"Charles," she said, gently, "we did love each other once. Try to think what those days were like. Forget all the hateful things I have said to you since. Only remember that we were happy then, and that it was my joy to please you. Then think of me as I am to-day—a woman of unsatisfied wants, a woman who has suffered, and who, out of that suffering, wants to help a girl who is dear to her. Charles, I always wanted a child. Everything that is maternal in me is centered in Janet. I want to save her. I know it's hard for you to be here; you

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hate it. But, for the sake of what I was to you once, help me in this! Give Janet the advice you honestly think she ought to have!"

Blair rose abruptly and went over to the window. He was deeply moved. All Ada had said to Janet that morning she had said to him five years before, and it had angered him; he was too close to her and to the experience to be fair to her. Now, feeling for her only friendship, and seeing how she had been seared and broken by that far-off experience, he was sorry. He still believed that a big woman might have gone through the episode unscathed, but he was ready to revise his estimate about the number of big women in the world; they so often thought they were big when they were not. Blair's lips puckered as if he were about to whistle. He had a sense of humor, and this modified his chagrin that he should have been maturing Janet's views for Wilson. Not that Blair had gone so far in his own mind as to think he was forming Janet for himself; he was always willing to let the future come as it would. Men generally are, when the future has had the trick of shaping itself to suit their desires. So much had been going on in Janet's mind that he had been unaware of; he had not seen that she was especially attracted to Wilson. How did Janet measure with Ada? He doubted if she had even Ada's fiber. Janet would scarcely reach his revised standard of what a large-minded woman was.

He turned and saw Ada's sad eyes fixed on his own. He was rather worn out with the scene she had dragged him through, but he had a thrill of pity for her, and a quick sense of loyalty. She had been a good comrade to him in those old days; he would not fail her now. He looked at Janet.

"Miss Bellamy," he said, "Ada is right. Don't! You'll pay too much."

Ada leaned back in her chair with a long sigh, and closed her eyes. Janet rose and looked at Blair keenly.

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"Is it true, what she says?" she asked. "Is it true that he would respect me less? That's the only thing I want to know."

Blair was unable honestly to reply to that.

"I'm not good at introspection," he said. "I only know this: You will pay too much, and you'll make him pay."

Abruptly he left the room. Ada threw herself on the couch.

"I'm tired," she said. "I can't go to the settlement to-day. I'm worn out."

Janet stood for a moment staring at the door which Blair had closed after him. Then she went over and knelt by Ada.

"Dear Ada," she whispered, "I am grateful, but—I can't. It's too late. He needs me so."

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ADA looked up tearlessly. "Well," she said, passively, "I've done my best. I'll always stand by you, Janet. I've said all I'm going to say. You don't need me now, but you will. I'll be able to help you, perhaps, when all this turns to dust and ashes."

"Don't think for a moment," said Janet, quiveringly, "that there is not plenty of dust and ashes now?"

She went down-stairs to Wilson's flat. At the door he received her in his arms.

"I felt you on the stairs," he whispered, "my glorious Janet!"

When she looked at his face and saw that the tense lines had gone, and when she saw his expression of happiness and of reverence, her fears for the moment vanished. What did anything matter except that they belonged to each other?

Nature's way of carrying out her schemes is precisely like that of any of her creatures; she conceals the destructive elements which are later on to work havoc. The human nerves which are some day to jangle in hopeless, nagging discords she forms into *Æolian* harps upon which the winds of love play a harmony promising to last eternally. The memory which some day will be replete with incidents that are disquieting or sad, she steepes in such a magic that it can recall only the golden hours that have had to do with the obsession of love. She prophesies that the future is to be made up of what were the most

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glorious hours of the past. She destroys any belief in the reality of irritations or misfortunes, damage or loss. It is her mission to drug the sense of fear, and to inspire faith to the end of winning her inevitable way.

Thus Janet and Wilson, happy in each other's nearness, forgot the troubles that waited for them outside of each other. Janet forgot Ada's warning, was indifferent to what it had cost Ada in energy to try to save her. Wilson gave no thought to Sallie, in the hospital, her baleful eyes fixed on the door through which he would enter. The two were exhilarated with the consciousness of having at last made their decision; the great responsibility they were about to assume had given them for the moment a sense of irresponsibility. They were gay, laughing and chatting like children, much of the time not talking of their future at all. They even forgot the strike, though outside the four walls that housed them thousands of men were still looking for work, or anxiously waiting to hear that their employers had yielded and the strike was ended. Thousands of women were waiting for these men, hoping nothing; and little children, half clad and half fed, were accepting their bad fortune with no knowledge that they had a right to anything else. But Janet and Wilson were lost in the joy of each other.

Only once were they grave, when Wilson said:

"I don't think we ought to go very far away. I ought to be able to go to the hospital daily. I own two or three furnished cottages in Roby, which I've been lending to working people as they need them. One of them is empty now. It's a rough enough place, Janet—"

"That doesn't matter," Janet said. "The point is, you can come to Chicago every day. We'll not be there long at the best. And no matter how cheap the little place may be, Richard, if you're there it is beautiful to me, and it is home."

Later she went to her own flat, having arranged to see Wilson again in the afternoon, when he should have made

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the final arrangements for their departure. Ada was still lying on the couch; she did not speak when Janet entered. She was rather a disquieting presence, bringing back to Janet much that it would have been more agreeable to forget. Janet went into her own room, where she began to muse about that little cottage in Roby. Already she was calling it home. She wondered if she could not take with her some pictures and cushions, something that would make the place more definitely his and hers—their room, at least.

Their room! Janet sat down and lost herself in the dreams that had been hers throughout the wakeful night. They were tender dreams, yet now and then they were disturbed—cut across by the sharp memory of Ada's pleading of the morning. Oh, could it be true that he would respect her less? Could it be true that she would be unhappy, and thus make him unhappy? She shook away the thoughts, saying that if ever they returned Wilson's arms would banish them. But at the moment he was not there to banish them, and they kept pouring in again after she had pushed them away, lifting their uneasy heads over the threshold of her joy. She lost them at last in the absorbing sweetness of packing her dress-suit case with the clothes that she was to wear after she and Richard had entered upon their new world.

During luncheon she told her plans to Ada, who made no comment, except to say, with a wan smile:

"And you are the girl who thought she could live for a cause, who had given her life to some great, impersonal interest, so that love and a man could not hurt you any more?"

"I am that girl, but I talked like a fool," Janet said. "Love and a man aren't going to hurt me; they are going to help me. Just because I shall have my own life, just because I am going to be happy, I can throw myself into other interests as I never did before."

Ada sighed, but did not reply. If she had known how

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deeply her words of the morning had really affected Janet she might have made one more effort. But Janet would have told her that a single glance at Wilson's face could nullify any plea from any one else.

In the afternoon Ada went up to Blair's rooms. Two or three guests were coming in to tea whom she had to help entertain. Janet said she thought she would try to sleep; but sleep failed her. She decided to join the group up-stairs; never again could she be with them in the sense in which she would be with them that afternoon. It would be strange enough, she thought; she was going away with Wilson, and when she came back every one would treat her as if she were the same person. But she could never again be the old Janet. Side by side with them, she would live a life of which they would know nothing. Janet sighed as she reflected that if they guessed at that life they would, nevertheless, have to pretend that they suspected nothing.

Wilson was not there, and Janet felt relieved. Only about half those she was accustomed to see were present, Sonya and Charters being among the absentees. She was faintly amused to note how oblivious Blair appeared to be of her and Ada. He did his duty by the visitors, and then talked to Mrs. Underwood, always a soothing presence, even if she had few liberal ideas. Late in the afternoon, just as the guests were leaving, Charters entered, disheveled and excited. He made for Blair, oblivious of the curious looks of the departing guests, not seeing the friends he pushed aside.

"Blair," he said, hoarsely, "there's hell to pay!"

"What's the matter? A riot?" Blair asked. "Have the strikers—"

Charters breathed hard and passed his hand across his forehead.

"My God, it makes a man sick that he has to live!" he said. "I've been trying to get you by telephone all afternoon. Hundreds of the strikers have gone back to

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work. Some of the employers have granted a little, and the men compromised. Some firms yielded nothing, but the men went back anyhow. A couple wouldn't take back the men. Meyer and Friedman was one."

His listeners nodded. They knew that Meyer and Friedman had assumed a singularly bitter attitude against their late employees. They had engaged an especially brutal set of strike-breakers, and the picketing attempted in front of their shop had resulted always in disaster to the pickets. The police, who were supposed to guard the interests of law and order, were notoriously on the side of the firm and the strike-breakers.

"It's about Anton Riborsky I am trying to tell you," went on Charters. "We told him not to go back there, Blair, when we bailed him out and paid his fine. But the fellow was half crazy, I guess. Anyway, one of the neighbors telephoned me he'd gone up there. I left everything in the office and hurried over. None of the pickets dares to do more than walk past the shop, and at that they're hustled off the sidewalk. But I guess Anton had been trying to talk to the scabs. Anyway, they were beating him up when I got there. They said he was trying to fight; I don't believe it. They said he had a pistol and drew it. It's a lie; they put it on him afterward. He's dead. They shot him. They shot him to pieces!"

Nobody spoke. The loudest sound in the room was Charters' heavy breathing. Blair rose.

"I'll go," he said. "Nothing to be done, of course. Who fired—the strike-breakers or the police?"

"Both, I think," said Charters, bitterly. "To-morrow we'll be told all about Anton's violence, and not a word about the brutes that killed him. I think they broke his arm with their clubs, too. I know his head was beaten in."

Mrs. Underwood was crying softly. Ada and Janet stood side by side, clinging to each other.

"Where's the body?" asked Blair, searching for his hat.

Ada found the hat for him while Charters replied:

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"Undertaker's; you don't suppose they'd lose a chance of fixing their evidence?"

Blair took his hat from Ada and left the room. Charters turned to Janet.

"Sonya's with Anton's wife and children by this time. I telephoned her. I wish you'd go to her. I can't get there for a while. Blair will need me. It'll be hard for Sonya; the place will be full of screaming Jewesses. Go to her, Janet."

"Yes," said Janet; "oh yes."

For the time being Wilson had retreated to the back of her mind. The atmosphere about her was charged with sympathy and pain. Not one of Charters' listeners but had forgotten his own concerns, and was feeling the tragedy of the Riborskys, and the strange, wild ways into which greed and anger can lead poor human beings. Janet responded to the larger mood of those about her. The fact that she and Wilson were going away that evening receded before Sonya's present need of help.

In a few minutes she was in the three dreary rooms which housed Anton Riborsky's dying wife and the four fatherless children. As Charters had predicted, the sick woman and Sonya were surrounded by a crowd of Jewish women expressing their grief and excitement in the racial way. The children were frightened and screaming; their mother was moaning. Only Sonya was still, listening with her somber, tragic eyes fixed afar off, as if seeing the advance of some grief greater even than this one present with her.

Janet summoned her best air of authority, and sent away all the women except one old creature who had lived through so much that nothing could stir her to any expression of emotion. She was given charge of the children, and then Sonya and Janet did what they could for Anton's widow. The dead man's poor battered body was to be brought home the next day. Janet and Sonya discussed in whispers the arrangements for the

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funeral. Then they gave the children their evening meal.

After a time Ada entered, having pushed her way through a crowd of excited and curious women who stood on the staircase and in the halls, and outside the tenement-house.

"I've come to take charge, if I may, Sonya," Ada said. "Jimmy Charters has just telephoned me. He wants Janet to bring you to our flat. Somebody is getting dinner there for you both. Do go."

"Yes, do, Sonya," Janet said; "your sister-in-law is asleep, and you won't be needed for a little while. The change will do you good."

"All right," said Sonya, passively.

She and Janet went out, their progress impeded by the groups of women who caught at Sonya's arms and wailed aloud. Janet thought their grief was like some cosmic cry of pain, some wild lament for personal sorrow, for the sorrows of the world, and for all the inexplicable tragic happenings of life. Sonya passed on with unmoved face; it was Janet who detached the hands of the women and who pushed them aside. Until they reached the Harrowgate Apartments Sonya spoke only once. Then she said:

"There's nothing but trouble; nothing, nothing but trouble."

Janet could not answer her. Under that brooding gaze there seemed no fitting reply. She pressed Sonya's arm tenderly and quickened their pace. Charters would be the best help for Sonya. When she opened the door of her flat she found him there with Mrs. Underwood preparing food. Janet and Mrs. Underwood left Sonya to him. Mrs. Underwood went to her own rooms, and Janet went down to Wilson's flat. A dull, unbearable misery was oppressing her; she wanted his arms.

After a time she looked at her watch, and was startled to see that it was almost the hour at which she had

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promised to meet him. She would barely have time to pack a few last things in her dress-suit case and put on her hat and coat. She went back to her flat and softly entered, passing into the living-room.

Charters was sitting by the table, his head resting upon it, his arms outstretched. Sonya knelt beside him, her tears falling heavily. There was in her face a grief, so heartbreaking, so transcendent, that Janet was startled.

"Oh, what is it!" cried Janet, involuntarily.

"He hadn't seen what it meant. I was just telling him," Sonya said. She did not attempt to touch Charters; she did not wipe away her tears.

"Oh, but what?" said Janet.

"How could we be getting married yet?" asked Sonya. "Jimmy's salary, it is not much more than a law-clerk would have. There are my sister and the four children. I have to work now till the oldest boys can help. I tell Jimmy four years—maybe three. I tell him if my sister dies soon, maybe three years. Jimmy could not take care of six people."

"Sonya!" whispered Janet.

Sonya got up and put her hand clumsily on Jimmy's hair. "What can I do?" she asked, fiercely. "Here are four children, and no one but me to take care of them. If Jimmy and I married, I would have children. There would be more children and not enough money, and Jimmy overworked and getting the look in his face that poor men have."

Charters groped for her hand.

"He knows it's true," Sonya said; "it's as true as that I've loved him for five years. We can wait, because it's right to wait. We have seen enough of the poor to know it's wrong to bring children into the world and not be able to take care of them."

"You won't have to wait; I promise you that," said Janet, in a strange, abrupt tone.

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She left them and went down again to Wilson's flat. He opened the door to her.

"I've just come in," he said, his face glad at the sight of her. "I expected to find you here. Why, what's wrong?"

In a quiet, almost hard tone Janet told him all that had happened, including the sacrifice which Sonya was taking for granted of Charters and herself.

"I want you to use some of your money for them," she said. "Arrange to take care of that woman and her children. They can have my flat. Ada can live with Miss Shepherd; they'd get on. Sonya can marry Charters and live openly with him in his flat."

"Janet!" cried Wilson, appalled at the bitterness of tone with which she ended her planning. "My poor child! The day's been too hard for you! Get your hat and coat and come." He held out his arms.

"No," moaned Janet. "Ah, don't touch me! Don't you see? I'm not going, Richard. I don't know whether what Ada said to me helped change me or not. Perhaps it is true that your love for an unmarried wife would lessen. But when I think of Sonya—she's never had anything but Jimmy Charters, and she was giving him up because it was right!"

Janet's voice broke, and she put her hand over her heart.

"Oh, my Richard, do you know why? Because she did not want to bring children into the world and not be able to care for them. That is what love should mean, Richard—children; home and children, but particularly children."

Wilson stood beside her, his face gray and fixed.

"So then," Janet said, "I asked myself the test question. I could risk convention for myself, but could I for a child? And I couldn't. Down in my secret heart I had decided that you and I should have love, but no children. So that showed me," she finished, wearily, "that the whole thing is wrong. You and I are compromising,

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not because we are so big that we are above the law, but because we are so weak that we can't keep the law."

"I think," said Wilson, in a choked voice, "that you should take a few days to decide this. This has upset you."

"I have decided now," Janet said. "Don't you see? I've never given up anything in my life; I've had it torn away from me, perhaps; but I've never yet bent my will to do a hard thing. I need you; you need me; but the world needs the example of our decency. I'm weak. If you put your arms about me I'll yield; I'll tell you that I don't care for Sallie, or the law, or marriage. I want your arms, but—help me!"

"I need you," cried Wilson.

Janet sank on the floor at his feet.

"Oh, help me, Richard," she wept. "Help me! Leave me!"

Wilson bent over her, his hands clenched, his under lip bitten savagely. He looked fierce, hungry, rather than loving. He was about to lift her to her feet, to hold her to his heart. Then his hands relaxed, his face grew tender. Gently he took her hand and led her to a chair.

"Good-by, my beloved," he said. "I won't even kiss your hair or touch your dear face. I shall never love any one but you, and I shall tell you that to the longest day I live."

When he had closed the door behind him Janet broke into hard, tearless sobbing.

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FULFILMENT

IT was three years and a half later. Janet lay in the hammock which she had hung in a clearing in the woods edging her father's farm. It was here during the warm months that she carried on the writing in which she had tried to interest herself after she and Wilson had parted. Here she read his weekly letters, and every one ended in the same way—that his love was unshaken.

Her face had changed. She knew that, if its first vividness had gone, there had come instead a serenity, a kind of high beauty, which her young girlhood had never promised. She knew, too, that her abnegation had paid for itself with that best coin of the soul—strength. If there were still days of rebellion, of wild longing for Wilson, there were also days of peace, of certainty that the love between them now was a deeper, nobler thing than that other love which they had given up. Janet went sometimes to Chicago to visit Grace Ryder, but she never saw Wilson; and her visits were brief, precisely because the knowledge that he was not three miles from her soon grew unbearable.

On this June afternoon she was reading a letter from Ada. She should have had one from Wilson, but she knew that if it had not come to-day it would come to-morrow. Much of Janet's old importunity had gone. Ada had been nursing Blair through a long illness. She wrote that they were soon to be married, and would spend the summer abroad.

"You went abroad to get rid of grief, poor dear," Ada

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wrote; "and we are going abroad to recapture happiness. Charles and I can't pretend we are wildly in love with each other, but we do get on well, and if Charles can compromise his principles so far as to propose marriage, I do believe he's got to the age when he won't be looking at other women. Anyway, I'm going to risk it. Dear Janet, I do foresee happiness—children, I hope, and years of good work and affection together!"

Janet's eyes were a little dim as she read. She was glad that Ada's life was promising her something at last. Time had done a great deal for all the people she cared for. Grace Ryder was happy; she and her husband were closer than they had ever been. Sonya and Charters were married and had a little girl named Janet. Her father and Cousin Lilius were wearing on to a serene and contented old age. Many of the poor people she had known led easier lives because of Wilson's care for them. Surely time would some day be good to him and her. Hope and patience were easier for Janet than they could have been in the old days.

She heard a step which was not the fluttering footfall of Cousin Lilius nor her father's slow tread. Her heart began to beat thickly. So many times she had thought Wilson was coming, and so many times it was only her longing that had betrayed her. Therefore, when the trees revealed him, when she saw him crossing the little clearing, she could not believe that it was really he. It was not till he was beside her, his hands clasping hers, that she knew that her dream was true.

"I did not write you; I wanted to wait till it was all over. She was buried yesterday—poor little Sallie!"

Janet's first feeling was not joy that they were free. It was a deep emotion of pity for the old friend whose life had gone awry, a memory of Sallie as she had been in the old, care-free days, when she had never doubted that the world would be good to her. Wilson under-

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stood. Then gradually joy leapt into her eyes, carried its flames to her cheeks and lips.

"Ah, Richard!" she cried. "Mine now, honorably mine!"

They sat side by side with clasped hands, a little grave for all their happiness.

"You're glad," Janet asked, "glad that we waited?"

Wilson hesitated.

"I don't believe—I never can believe that my love for you wasn't a big thing, that it would have been weakened by the very thing that would have crowned it—yourself. We were right to give it up because you felt as you did. But close to four years of my youth have gone."

Janet laughed joyously.

"Hear me laugh, Richard!" she cried. "My youth has come back. I'll give you yours again."

A deep tenderness shone in Wilson's eyes.

"When," he said, softly—"when will you marry me?"

"As soon as you like," Janet replied. "But—but say it, Richard, beloved."

"That I love you more than ever?" he whispered.

"That I shall never love any one else? But there is something I want to say that is sweeter."

"Say it."

"My wife."

They went deeper into the woods, taking their first steps together on that voyage which is the best thing Nature has designed for man and woman—a journey which is made up of joys and fears, pains and comforts, irritations and deprivations, hopes and gains; a voyage which is merely the course of daily living of a united two; a voyage which, if only love is the pilot, pays well every rod of its way to the verge of that other journeying whither we take our passage alone.

THE END

